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Listening Instruction and Teacher Cognition
Underpinning the Skill in Iranian Private English
Institutes

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ABSTRACT

Although the teaching of listening as a distinct and critical skill for L2 learning has been explored by researchers and practitioners over the last fifty years, it is still the least researched, and probably the least understood macro-skill. The number of studies that have explored listening instruction systematically is limited in volume and scope, with most of the existing literature based on intuitive explanations and individual perceptions rather than empirical evidence. Exploration of second language teacher cognition has also attracted the attention of many researchers over the last four decades. The majority of studies in this area have focused on grammar and literacy, and teacher cognition has not adequately addressed the skill of listening. In addition, research and scholarship to date has largely been conducted in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts where listening practice opportunities are readily available outside the classroom.

This study therefore aims to explore how teachers undertake listening instruction and the cognitions underpinning their practices through an investigation of teachers' beliefs, principles and practices. It also investigates how and to what extent different potential factors shaped teachers' listening classroom practices and their cognitions. In order to address these questions, the study adopted a mixed-method approach, and drew on observations, interviews, curriculum data, and questionnaires. It took place in an EFL context (seven private English language institutes in Iran) in which learners had limited contact with English as first language speakers, but where listening was provided as an essential skill for those who wish to travel overseas, especially for academic purposes.

Findings reveal that listening instruction was characterised by a number of techniques based on integrated approaches. Teachers were familiar with different teaching approaches and had

knowledge of an extensive repertoire of listening techniques. The influence of a Communicative Language Teaching approach on teaching listening was also observed through the use of authentic materials; linking listening with other skills; activating background knowledge; and encouraging general understanding. While comprehension-based practices were common, it was not the dominant approach in teaching listening in private English institutes in Iran. Concerning teacher cognition, teachers considered listening to be a teachable independent skill that requires explicit teaching as an independent skill and emphasized the importance of instruction in metacognitive strategies. Listening was regarded as invaluable input for second language learning and developing other skills, especially speaking. While teaching experience and contextual factors were the most influential factors in shaping teachers' cognitions and classroom practices in the questionnaire responses, interview findings illustrated that teachers considered the effect of contextual factors more influential than other elements.

Dedicated to my mother, who passed away just after I started my PhD

And to my wife for helping to turn my dreams into reality

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
List of Acronyms	x
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
CHAPTER ONE	1
Introduction	1
1.1 Motivation for the study	1
1.2 Teaching listening	3
1.3 Teacher cognition	5
1.3.1 Defining teacher cognition	5
1.3.2 Teacher cognition and classroom practices	7
1.4 Education and English language teaching in Iran	8
1.5 A conceptual and research frameworks	9
1.6 Study aims and significance	14
1.7 Outline of the thesis	16
CHAPTER TWO	17
Literature Review	17
2.1 Teaching the skill of listening	17
2.1.1 Comprehension based and analytic approaches to teaching listening	20
2.1.2 Synthetic approaches to teaching listening	25
2.1.3 Scholarly recommended formats for listening instruction	30
2.1.4 Using authentic materials	33
2.1.5 Listening assessment	35
2.1.6 Summary	37
2.2 Teacher cognition	38
2.2.1 Components of the construct of teacher cognition	40
2.3 Teacher cognition in second language (L2) teaching and learning	42
2.3.1 Pre-service and in-service teachers' cognition about language learning	43
2.3.2 Teacher cognition and classroom practices	46
2.3.3 Factors influences teacher cognition and classroom practices	51
2.3.4 Teacher cognition and Communicative Language Teaching	56
2.3.5 Teacher cognition with regard to receptive skills	60

2.4 English in secondary and tertiary education in Iran	64
2.4.1 Curriculum and methodology	64
2.4.2 Contextual constraints	67
2.4.3 English language teachers and learners in Iran	68
2.4.4 Summary	71
2.4.5 Conclusion	73
2.5 Rationale and research questions	73
CHAPTER THREE	76
Methodology	76
3.1 Research design	76
3.1.1 Selection of the pragmatic paradigm	76
3.1.2 Selection of mixed methods	78
3.2 Context and participants	79
3.2.1 The study context	79
3.2.2 Courses and institutions	81
3.2.3 Recruitment of participants	81
3.2.4 Participant profiles	84
3.2.5 Summary	86
3.3 Development and piloting of research instruments	86
3.3.1 Questionnaires	87
3.3.2 Observations	90
3.3.3 Interviews	91
3.3.4 Documents	95
3.3.5 Summary	95
3.4 Data collection and management	95
3.4.1 Data collection	96
3.4.2 Data management	100
3.4.3 Summary	101
3.5 Data analysis	101
3.5.1 Quantitative and qualitative data sets	101
3.5.2 Data analysis procedures	102
3.5.3 Summary	106
3.6 Evaluation of methodology	106
3.6.1 Quality criteria	106
3.6.2 Summary	111

3.7 Conclusion	111
CHAPTER FOUR	112
Classroom practices for L2 listening instruction	112
4.1 Questionnaire results	112
4.2.1 Summary	122
4.2 Discussion of questionnaire results	122
4.3 Results of classroom observations	125
4.3.1 All classroom practices in each phase of listening	125
4.3.2 Top-down and bottom-up teaching practices	130
4.3.3 Comprehension-based practices and use of L1	137
4.3.4 Metacognitive-focused practices	143
4.3.5 Using authentic materials and teaching listening with other skills	149
4.3.6 Summary of results	154
4.4 Discussion of observation results	155
4.4.1 Summary	159
CHAPTER FIVE	160
Teachers' cognitions	160
5.1 Listening instruction in terms of teaching difficulty and emphasis	160
5.2 Checking/ensuring comprehension	163
5.3 Making learners more involved	167
5.4 Teaching listening explicitly	170
5.5 The importance of bottom-up and top-down activities	174
5.6 Using listening to improve other skills	177
5.7 The effect of extensive listening and authentic materials	179
5.8 Summary	182
5.9 Discussion of teachers' cognition	183
CHAPTER SIX	187
Factors influencing teacher cognition and classroom practices	187
6.1 Questionnaire results	187
6.2 Interview results	191
6.2.1 Contextual factors	192
6.2.2 Learners and teachers' experience as learners	197
6.2.3 Teaching Experience	200
6.2.4 Teacher training courses and assessments	201

6.2.5 Summary	203
6.3 Discussion of factors influencing teachers’ cognition and classroom practices ...	204
CHAPTER SEVEN	208
Conclusion	208
7.1 Review of the study	208
7.2 Pedagogical implications	212
7.3 Limitations of the study	215
7.4 Suggestions for further research	217
References	219
APPENDICES	244
Appendix A: Ethics Approval	244
Appendix B: Participant Information Sheets	245
Appendix C: Participant Consent Forms.....	247
Appendix D: Questionnaire.....	248
Appendix E: Observation Guide	254
Appendix F: Interview Guide.....	255
Appendix G: Teachers’ Written Lesson Plan.....	256
Appendix H: Sample Teaching Material.....	257
Appendix I: Listening Assessment Task.....	258
Appendix J: Sample Interview Transcript.....	259
Appendix K: Sample Observation Notes Transcription.....	260
Appendix L: Categories used in the coding of classroom practices	261
Appendix M: Categories used in the coding of teachers’ cognition and influential factors	263
Appendix N: Sample Teacher Profile	264

List of Acronyms

CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a second language
FL	Foreign Language
L2	Second Language

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Professional profiles of participants.....	76
Table 2: Questionnaire responses regarding practices pre-, during and post-listening: Part B (N=72).....	105
Table 3: Teachers' reported classroom practices for the skill of listening: Part B (N= 72).....	109
Table 4: Categories of teachers' practices for teaching listening (Part E).....	112
Table 5: All classroom practices in the pre- and during listening phase.....	121
Table 6: All classroom practices in the post-listening and post-listening extension phase.....	122
Table 7: Ranking skills and sub-skills in terms of teaching difficulty: Part A (N=72)....	152
Table 8: Ranking skills and sub-skills in terms of emphasizing: Part A (N=72).....	153
Table 9: Categories of teachers' further comments on teaching listening in Iran: Part F.....	154
Table 10: Categories of teachers' reasons for classroom practices: Part E (N=72).....	156
Table 11: Teachers' cognition underpinning classroom practices (interview results)....	157
Table 12: Teachers' cognition about teaching listening as a separate skill: Part C (N=72).....	162
Table 13: Teachers' cognition about the importance of teaching listening strategies: Part C (N=72).....	164
Table 14: Teachers' cognition about the importance of bottom-up and top-down activities: Part C (N=72).....	167
Table 15: Teachers' cognition about the effect of listening on other skills: Part C (N=72).....	169

Table 16: Teachers' cognition about extensive listening and the use of authentic materials Part C (N=72).....	172
Table 17: Questionnaire responses regarding factors shaping teachers' cognition: Part D (N=72).....	180
Table 18: Questionnaire responses regarding factors shaping listening classroom practices: Part D (N=72).....	181
Table 19: Categories of teachers' further comments on teaching listening in Iran: Part F.....	182
Table 20: Factors influencing teachers' cognition and classroom practices.....	184

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: A conceptual framework of teacher cognition.....	10
Figure 2: A framework of factors influencing the reciprocal relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practices.....	11
Figure 3: Substantive and methodological elements in language teacher cognition research.....	13
Figure 4: A conceptual framework of teacher cognition.....	42
Figure 5: A framework of factors influencing the reciprocal relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practices.....	55
Figure 6: The study context.....	80
Figure 7: Data collection process.....	96

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This thesis presents a study into teacher cognition and practices with regard to developing the skill of listening among students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Iranian private language schools. To contextualise the study, the purpose of this chapter is to provide information about teaching the skill of listening. It aims to define teacher cognition and illustrates its main components. It also clarifies the educational context in Iran as well as the conceptual and research frameworks underlying this study. Finally, it presents the rationale for the study and the outline of the thesis.

1.1 Motivation for the study

My interest in conducting research into teacher cognition and the skill (EFL) listening has its origins in my experiences as an English language teacher in Iran. After graduating from university, I was employed by a private English institute that required all novice teachers to complete a teacher education course organised by the institute. The main focus of this course was to acquaint novice teachers with different approaches to instruction (especially Communicative Language Teaching, hereafter CLT) and to prescribe teaching techniques. The knowledge and experience that teachers brought with them to the teaching context, and the role of teachers in the learning process, were ignored. It was assumed that the ‘correct’ way to teach was the one that was consistent with the approach advocated by the teacher educators, and that teaching was primarily the acquisition of a specific set of behaviours. No attention was given to the beliefs, knowledge, and pedagogical principles which shape teachers’ decisions and classroom practices.

The second source of my interest in this area was observations I carried out of different classes in the institute taken by experienced teachers. I found it very interesting that teachers taught the same lessons (as set out in the prescribed course materials and books) in different ways. For example, in one situation, they were teaching listening and some related exercises from the same textbook. At the pre-listening stage, one teacher wrote on the board a number of words with their meanings in context for the text that would be used for listening. Then she played the listening part twice and students answered the questions. Finally, she checked the answers and provided the students with the correct ones. She went on to ask students to write the meaning of new words. However, another teacher first asked students some questions about the topic to activate their background knowledge. In addition, students were required to guess some words that they might find in the listening part. After listening to the text, the teacher asked students about the difficulty of the listening task and helped them to learn the new words. Next, students checked their answers with their teacher. Finally, students were asked to talk about the topic, using the new words and sentences extracted from the listening exercise. This made me realise that experienced teachers use their own preferred techniques to suit learners' needs.

The third source of my interest in this research area was the feedback I received from my own students and other students in Iran about their difficulties in becoming proficient in the skill of listening. In spite of taking many courses and working on many listening exercises, students complained about their limited ability to understand speakers in real communicative situations such as academic workshops or seminars when they travelled abroad to attend conferences or seminars. They attributed their low proficiency in listening to English teachers' method of teaching and poor materials, as well as their own underestimation of the importance of this

skill. It seemed to me that listening was not taught to them in a way that developed students' communicative skills.

From these experiences, I came to understand that teachers play a pivotal role in each teaching system, and that what they believe and know about language teaching affects their classroom practices. Since both teachers and researchers consider listening to be an essential skill for second language (L2) learning, I believe that studies of teacher cognition and teaching listening are of significant value in applied linguistics. Also, since listening is generally acknowledged to be the least understood and explored skill (e.g. Vandergrift, 2007), I hope that a study into teacher cognition with regard to this skill, and the approaches teachers utilize to teach listening, will benefit teachers and language learners in Iran and other contexts.

1.2 Teaching listening

It seems that, prior to the 1960s, listening received little attention in the literature on second language teaching and learning, and it seems to have been mainly viewed as a means of presenting and practicing new grammar rules (Richards & Renandya, 2002; Field, 2002). The productive skills (writing and speaking) were emphasized, and listening and reading were regarded as receptive skills that could be developed through exposure and practice, with little explicit teaching. However, in the 1960s, the essential role of listening in learning another language began to be recognized, and there was a shift towards more emphasis on the nature of the skill of listening and methods of teaching and developing it. Listening also began to receive more prominence as a result of the emergence of some new approaches such as CLT, and Asher's Total Physical Response (1965). Listening is now regarded as being of central importance in language teaching; however, a number of scholars (Richards & Renandya, 2002;

Vandergrift, 2007) have noted the need for an increase in research attention to this still somewhat neglected macro-skill.

Listening is at the heart of language learning and it plays an important role in second language acquisition (Kurita, 2012; Rost, 2013; Vandergrift, 2007). Placing more emphasis on listening acknowledges the importance of the skill in providing comprehensible input, and improving other skills such as reading and speaking (Krashen, 1985; Oxford, 1993; Richards, 2005). It is also an essential skill for any learner whose aim is to develop the ability to communicate in spoken interactions of any kind (Nation & Newton, 2009). As a result of the importance of listening and active interest in the skill, over the years scholars have developed approaches for the teaching of listening (Field, 2008; Siegel, 2015). Traditionally, the standard format for the listening lesson comprised three steps: pre-listening, listening, and post listening (Field, 1998; Richards & Burns, 2012; Wilson, 2008). The first stage included the teaching of all new vocabulary. Exposure to the spoken text was followed by extensive listening questions for general understanding, and intensive questions for detailed comprehension. The post-listening phase comprised feedback on answers and repetition of the input. However, in time, this format has been modified. For example, in the model outlined by Field (2008), the pre-listening phase is devoted primarily to creating motivation, activating students' prior knowledge, and teaching only vocabulary that is essential for understanding. The listening phase is characterised by extensive listening (learners recognize context and attitudes), pre-set questions, and checking answers. Post listening now includes a wider range of activities that relate to meaning rather than form.

Another key element of successful teaching and learning of listening is instruction to raise learners' awareness of strategies, or aspects of listening and responses to listening that are

under the control of the listener. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) divided these strategies into metacognitive, cognitive and social-affective. In terms of listening, the main strategies are predicting, inferencing, monitoring, clarifying, responding, and evaluating (Rost, 2013). Over the last three decades, the benefits of strategy training have been presented, and they include providing learners with more trustworthy and less frustrating ways to enhance their listening comprehension, and heightening learners' awareness of the strategies that they can use to tackle listening difficulties (Vandergrift, 1999; Goh, 2002; Hinkel, 2006). For example, Nunan (2002) asserted the importance of including teaching key strategies (e.g. predicting, selective listening) in listening lessons, and Hinkel (2006) called attention to listening for gist, activating background knowledge (schema), and inferencing as key strategies to success in listening.

In the teaching of listening, analytic (bottom-up) and synthetic (top-down) approaches, denoting the ways in which listening input is processed, are usually taught in combination. "Bottom-up" refers to understanding at sound and word level, and piecing together larger units, while "top-down" refers to the impact of these larger units on recognizing the smaller units (Field, 2008; Goh, 2017). Bottom-up strategies rely on analysis of the process of input, while top-down strategies synthesize context and background knowledge for general understanding. Scholars believe that integrating both approaches in the listening classroom provides the best assistance to help learners develop their listening skill (Graham, 2017; Nunan, 2002; Field, 2008).

1.3 Teacher cognition

1.3.1 Defining teacher cognition

Teacher cognition is a multi-faceted and complex construct, and any satisfactory definition needs to encompass a number of different but related elements. The range of terms, each

emphasizing a particular facet of the construct, includes beliefs (Borg, 2011; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992), pedagogical knowledge (Gatbonton, 2000), personal practical knowledge (Golombek, 1998), cognition (Borg, 2003, 2015), principles (Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, & Thwaite, 2001), and professional knowledge (Wette, 2010). This multiplicity of terms reflects the inherent complexity of teacher cognition, which has been called as a “messy construct” (Pajares, 1992, p. 307). Scholars have also proposed different definitions based on philosophical and psychological insights (Borg, 2011). For example, Pajares (1992) used the term “beliefs” to refer to teacher cognitions, and defined them as “teachers’ attitudes about education - about schooling, teaching, learning, and students” (p. 316). Mullock (2006) adopted the term “pedagogical knowledge” and described it as “accumulated knowledge” about the act of teaching, including the goals, procedures, and strategies that form the basis of what teachers do in the classroom (p. 48). Borg (2003) described teacher cognition as “what teachers know, believe, and think” (p. 81). This assortment of concepts might well be, as Borg (2015) suggests, due to the complex nature of the field; however in the interest of clarity, I have selected particular definitions for this thesis.

The definition of teacher cognition that I will use is this - “what teachers know, think, and believe and how these relate to what teachers do” (Borg & Burns, 2008, p. 457). Teacher cognition is an “umbrella” term which includes what Woods (1996) called BAK (beliefs, assumptions and knowledge), a set of interrelated concepts. I acknowledge that teacher cognition is dynamic, multi-faceted, and influenced by a range of disparate factors (Knowles, 2013). These include: personality (Richards, 1996; Richards & Lockhart, 1994), content/disciplinary knowledge (Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Shulman, 1987), knowledge of pedagogy/how to teach (Richards, 1996; Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Shulman, 1987), experience as teachers (Mansour, 2008; Richards, 1996; Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Shulman,

1987) and as learners (Mansour, 2008; Richards & Lockhart, 1994), as well as knowledge of the constraints and resources of the home context (Mansour, 2008; Shulman, 1987).

1.3.2 Teacher cognition and classroom practices

Although teachers may appear to be eclectic in their classroom practices, their cognitions are shaped by interacting factors within and beyond the classroom context. Teacher cognition permeates all aspects of language teaching, and there exists a strong connection between different aspects of teaching such as beliefs, plans, and decisions behind classroom practices (Borg, 2015; Pajares, 1992). A wealth of studies from general education and applied linguistics has shown that teacher cognition and classroom practices are in a reciprocal relationship. While teacher cognition clearly shapes classroom practices, teachers' reflections on and experiences in the classroom also influence their cognition (Breen et al., 2001; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). However, although teacher cognition is an influential factor in determining classroom practices (Breen et al., 2001; Gatbonton, 2000; Li & Walsh, 2011; Nunan, 1992; Woods, 1996), the relationship between the two is not straightforward, since teachers' beliefs can be context-reliant, of different strengths and importance, and sometimes appear to be inconsistent with their actual practices (Mansour, 2009).

Any study into teacher cognition needs to consider factors specific to different contexts in order to understand the beliefs behind teachers' decisions and behaviours in classrooms. A review of relevant literature shows that a range of different factors can shape teacher cognition, including student characteristics (Nishino, 2012, Schulz, 2001), various socio-economic contexts (Hu, 2005; Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008), prior learning experience (Ellis, 2006), sociocultural perceptions (Reeves, 2009), teaching experience (Gatbonton, 2008), teacher education courses (Borg, 2011), and school culture and classroom conditions (Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004).

Scholars have found that teachers' individual characteristics (e.g. experience as a teacher and language learner) and contextual factors can both mediate between teachers' cognition and classroom practices, and cause some discrepancies between their stated beliefs, personal theories, and pedagogical principles and classroom practices.

1.4 Education and English language teaching in Iran

The research study reported in this thesis was conducted in Iran. In Iran, the Ministry of Education is responsible for basic and secondary education including teacher education courses and vocational education, while the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology is in charge of all tertiary education. In the current system, which has been in place since 2013, elementary education lasts for six years, with another six years for middle and high school education. Each academic year is divided into two semesters which run from September to June. In the current system, students begin studying English in Grade 7 (13 years old), and receive three to four hours of lessons per week. They must pass a 12 credit compulsory course over six years of instruction. With regard to evaluation, oral and written summative assessments are compulsory. Students' speaking ability is assessed through an oral presentation to evaluate their pronunciation and intonation, and their ability to memorize conversation extracts, and vocabulary, grammar, and reading are also evaluated. The skill of listening is not assessed. All examination questions and tasks must be based on the content of the textbooks issued by the Ministry of Education.

A substantial increase in the number of English learners over the last decade has resulted in class sizes of up to 50 students, and there is also fairly widespread dissatisfaction with the conservative methods of instruction used in the public education system. These two factors have led to a growth in the number of private EFL institutes (Davari & Aghagozlou, 2015). In

2005, there were 1971 such institutes, all licenced by the Ministry of Education (Talebinezhad & Sadeghi Beniss, 2005). These institutes are established in all major cities (Tehran, Mashhad, Shiraz, etc.). English may be taught as a compulsory subject in the public education system, but it is in the private EFL institutes that communicative and learner-centred approaches to language teaching and learning are employed (Talebinezhad & Sadeghi Beniss, 2005; Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006). These institutes also have better facilities than those found in public schools (e.g. English language laboratories, computers, and access to the Internet), and fewer learners in each class (usually fewer than 20). They generally run four or five semesters each year, with each semester comprising twenty 90-minute sessions of English.

Students at a range of proficiencies attend private EFL institutes to improve their general English. Some of them are at low level of proficiency at school, and are endeavouring to improve their skills, especially reading and grammar, in order to pass final examinations or the national university entrance examination. Others are at upper-intermediate or advanced levels, and are taking English courses in order to prepare for IELTS or TOEFL examinations. This group also includes those learners who have already graduated from university and need English language skills to further their education abroad, or to find a job in a company with international links. Generally speaking, most of the learners are secondary school students who concurrently attend public and private English schools. The study reported in this thesis was conducted with teachers of secondary school students in private English institutes.

1.5 A conceptual and research frameworks

As mentioned above, teacher cognition is a complex construct, composed of different components such as beliefs and different types of knowledge (Borg & Burns, 2008; Gatbonton, 2008). Teacher cognition also has a reciprocal relationship with classroom practices, and both

beliefs and practices can be influenced by a range of factors such as contextual elements (Woods, 1996). Due to its inherent complexity, teacher cognition has been chosen as an umbrella term to denote the fact that there is no clear border between teachers' beliefs and principles and/or beliefs and knowledge. Using the term cognition means that, in the study presented here, the construct is addressed as a unified term (including its different components) in order to clarify its relationship with listening classroom practices and factors influencing teacher cognition and practices. Figure 1 provides a conceptual framework for teacher cognition, illustrating its various components, based on the existing literature.

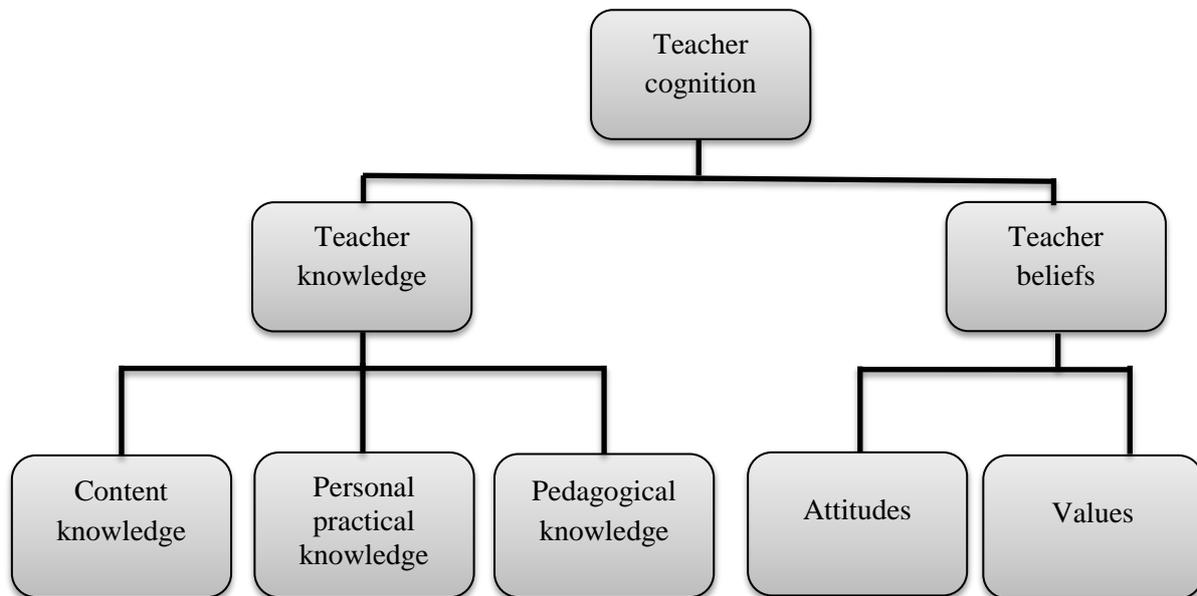


Figure 1: A conceptual framework of teacher cognition

The second framework is related to the reciprocal relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practices that can be mediated directly and indirectly by a range of factors. Figure 2 clarifies the relationship and influential factors.

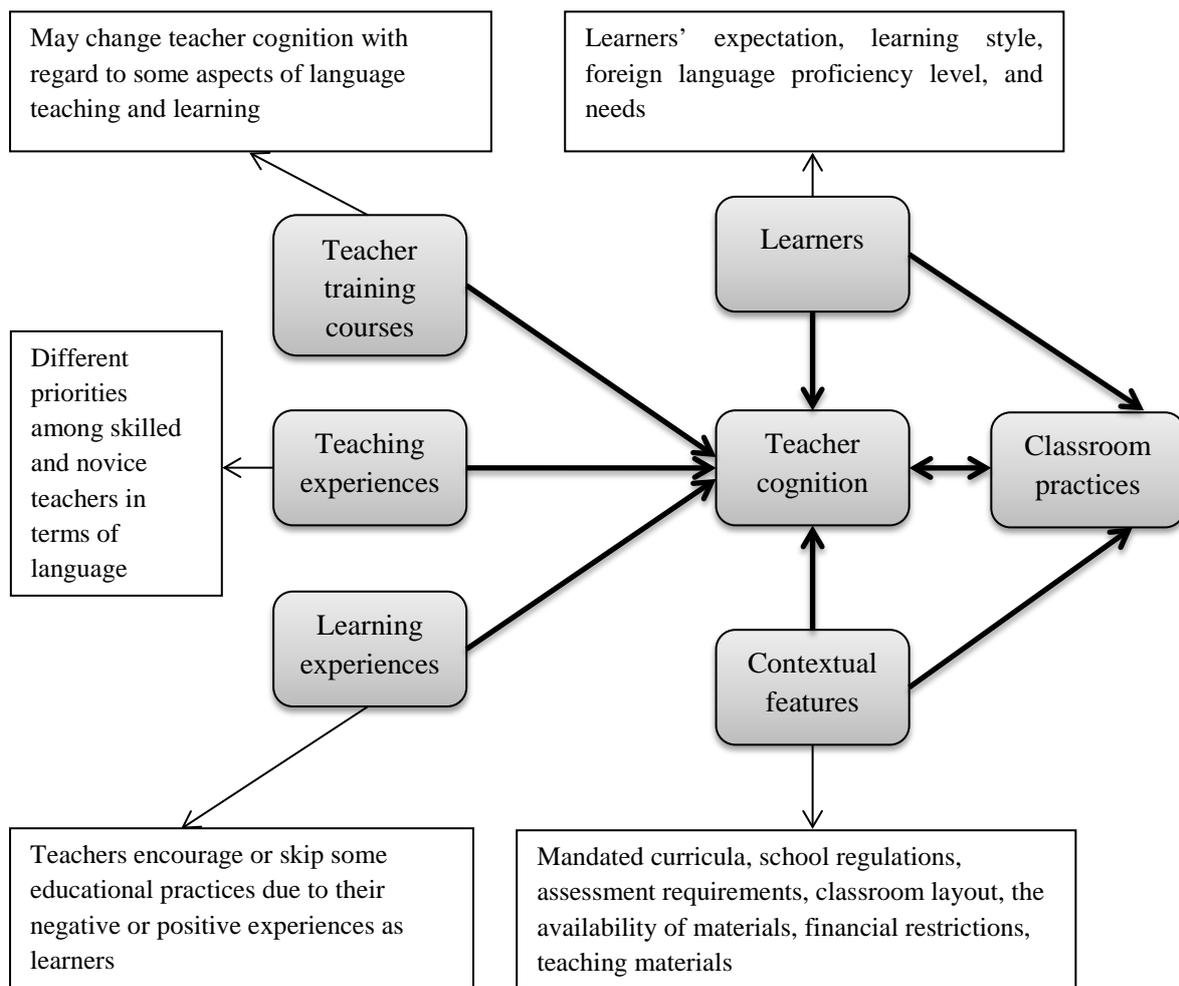


Figure 2: A framework of factors influencing the reciprocal relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practices

Borg (2015) analysed a large number of studies into teacher cognition in order to provide a framework and impose some structure on this field. He realised that studies in this field can be divided into substantive and methodological dimensions (Borg, 2015). The former refers to what is being investigated and the latter refers to how it may be investigated. The substantive dimension can describe and explain issues of interest without being concerned with methods (Punch, 2009). According to the substantive dimension, the conceptual frameworks (Figures 1 and 2) depict what is going to be studied.

Substantive and methodological aspects can also be sub-divided into “generic” or “domain-specific” (Borg, 2015, p. 281). Generic research deals with curricular areas such as planning and interaction, and domain-specific research examines teacher cognition with regard to a specific curricular area such as speaking and grammar. In terms of participants, researchers may draw on three groups of participants: pre- and in-service teachers as well as novice-expert teachers (Borg, 2015). Borg also notes that another aspect is the methodological issue. Studies into teacher cognition tend to adopt four data collection procedures: observation, self-report instruments (e.g. questionnaire), verbal commentaries (e.g. semi-structured and stimulated-recall), and reflective writing. Figure 3 depicts this research framework.

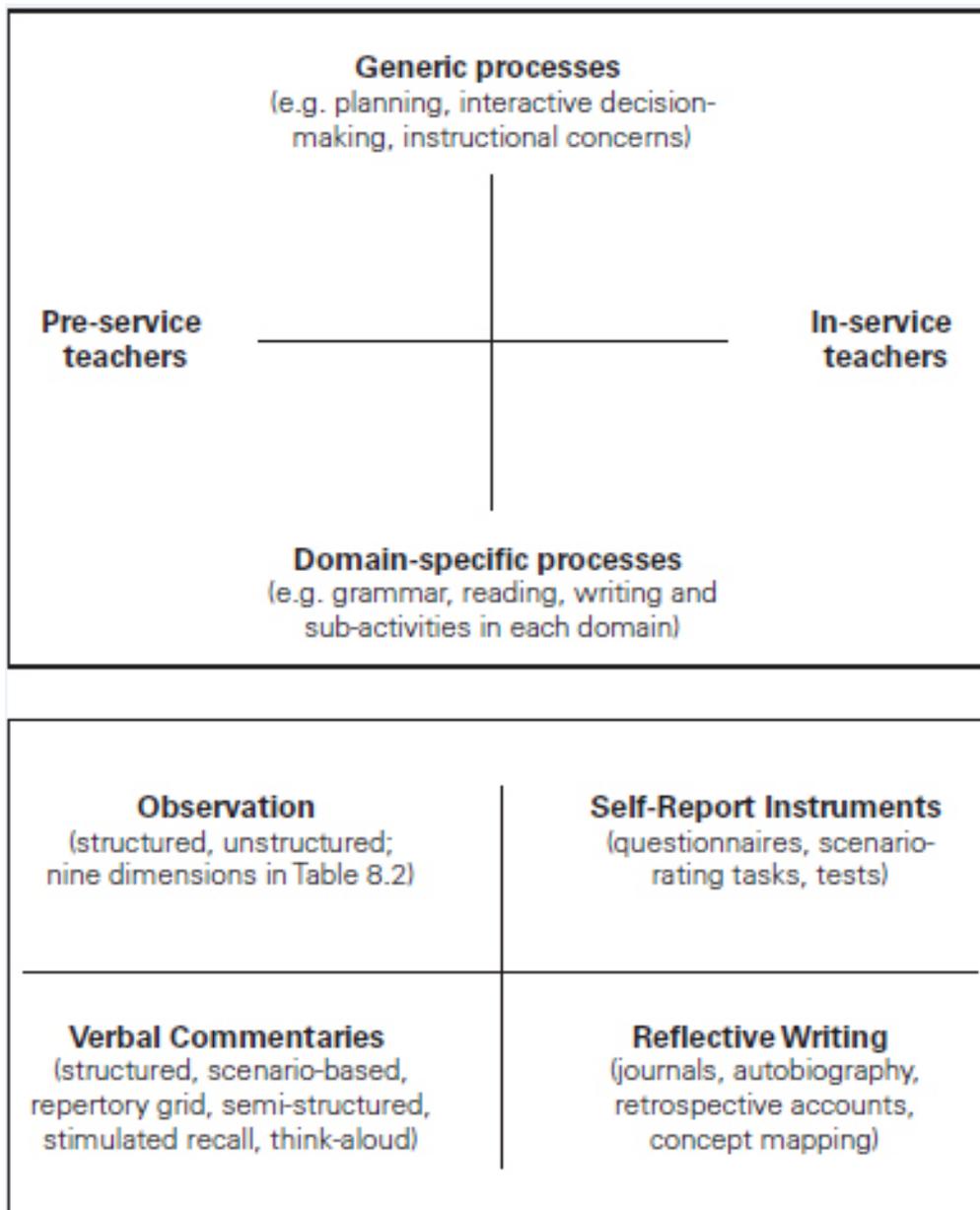


Figure 3: Substantive and methodological elements in language teacher cognition research (Borg, 2015, p. 282)

Drawing on the research framework illustrated in Fig. 3, the current study follows domain-specific research by investigating experienced in-service teachers' cognition with regard to listening pedagogy. Although teachers' reported reflections can provide useful information, this study aimed to investigate teacher cognition by also observing teachers' actual classroom practices, not what they think or do in isolation from these practices. To achieve this end, a

mixed methods approach was adopted in order to achieve an in-depth understanding of listening pedagogy, teacher cognition underpinning the skill, and factors influencing teacher cognition through triangulating quantitative and qualitative data. In line with Borg's (2015) research framework, a range of instruments including questionnaire, observations, interviews (semi-structured and stimulated-recall), and curriculum documents was employed.

1.6 Study aims and significance

The main focus of this study is to contribute to research-based knowledge on listening, and in particular to the teaching of listening in an EFL context where contact with first language (L1) speakers of English is relatively limited. It aims to explore teaching the skill of listening by investigating teacher cognitions and classroom practices, and the internal and external influences that shape both cognitions and instructional practices.

Although there has been growth in recent years in the number of studies related to teacher cognition in teaching other skills such as writing (Diab, 2005; Lee, 2013), reading (Kuzborska, 2011; Macalister, 2010) and sub skills such as grammar (Farrell & Lim, 2005; Borg & Burns, 2008; Phipps & Borg, 2009), relatively little research and scholarly interest have been directed to the skill of listening. However, increased global contact between speakers of English (both L1 and L2 speakers) in worldwide communication for business, study and social purposes has made listening an ever more vital skill in today's world. Without effective listening skills, possibilities for misunderstanding increase, especially when both interlocutors are not L1 speakers of English (Nunan, 1997). While listening can be regarded as an essential skill in learning another language in different contexts and for various purposes, it has been the least investigated skill to date (Vandergrift, 2007). Listening is an essential source for providing learners with comprehensible input. Listening input is also a helpful source for teaching new

forms of different components of language such as grammar or vocabulary. Furthermore, teaching listening can improve speaking skills and help learners to understand the authentic language that L1 speakers use in real communication.

In the context of Iran, a large number of students leave the country each year to further their education, especially in English-speaking countries such as England and the USA. Based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2014), approximately 51,549 Iranian students are currently studying in ten different countries. These students need to communicate in their new communities, and listening plays a crucial role in helping students to meet this goal. In 2015, economic sanctions against Iran were lifted, and the current government is seeking closer links with the West. This trend will quite possibly lead to more contact between academic and business sections in Iran and western countries, which will increase the importance of communication, including listening, in cross-cultural communication encounters.

Since teaching is more than a set of visible behaviours, and English language teaching does not employ any single method, we need to understand more about the beliefs and knowledge that inform teachers' classroom practices when they teach the skill of listening. In spite of the existing body of literature on teacher cognition in instructing literacy and grammar, the paucity of studies into teacher cognition with regard to teaching listening and the particular factors that shape this cognition has been noted (Borg, 2003, 2015; Graham, Santos, & Francis-Brophy, 2014). In addition, most of the studies into listening to date have been conducted in ESL contexts, and a lack of equivalent research in EFL contexts dealing with L2 speakers is apparent. This study therefore aims to investigate teacher cognition by studying the cognitions and classroom practices of L2 English teachers in an EFL context in the belief that research in contexts such as Iran can enrich our understanding of teacher cognition, since different

contextual and social factors may be influential compared to those that play a role in Anglo-western teaching contexts.

The research questions that will guide this study, with regard to the teaching of EFL listening by experienced teachers working in Iranian private English schools, are as follow:

1. What classroom practices characterise EFL teachers' teaching?
2. What cognitions underpin their classroom practices?
3. What factors shape teachers' cognitions and classroom practices?

1.7 Outline of the thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter One is the introduction, which has provided an overview of the research along with its aims. Chapter Two reviews the literature relating to teaching listening, teacher cognition, and the context of the study. In this chapter, gaps are identified and the rationale behind the research and specified research questions are presented. Chapter Three specifies detailed information on the research methodology, participants, instruments, data collection, and data analysis. The results of the study are presented and discussed in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. Finally, Chapter Seven provides a summary of key findings followed by a discussion of pedagogical implications for teaching listening. It also presents the limitations of the study and offers suggestions for further studies into listening pedagogy and teacher cognition.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The following chapter presents information about the importance of listening in L2 learning and how listening pedagogy has evolved and has been approached in various ways. It gives information about the components of teacher cognition and their relationship with classroom practices in order to build a conceptual framework for the present study. A discussion of factors influencing teacher cognition and classroom practices is also provided. This chapter provides information about the English curriculum and teaching methodology in Iran, and also outlines some significant constraints in this particular instructional context. Finally, it presents the rationale and research questions informing the present study.

2.1 Teaching the skill of listening

Listening is an important macro-skill in L2 learning and plays an essential role for effective communication. Research interest in teaching the skill of listening emerged in the 1960s, and these were based on theoretical frameworks that had been developed for reading and writing pedagogy (Brown, 1987). Over the last half century, the common format for teaching listening encompassed three stages (pre-listening, listening, and post-listening). This was a modified form of the early comprehension approach, and demonstrated a shift from an exclusive focus on the “products” or results of listening to also include listening processes (Field, 1998, 2002). This expansion in research and scholarship has led to the inclusion of studies into listening for details, connecting listening in the classroom to real-life listening, and motivating students to listen.

The development of communicative approaches has also strongly influenced the teaching of listening by emphasizing the critical role of listening in oral communication. Brown (1987) noted three concepts derived from CLT that have had a significant effect on listening pedagogy: the difference between spoken and written language, aspects of authenticity, and contextualization of listening instruction. CLT has motivated teachers to move away from traditional long passages of text, which teachers read aloud to the class, to more authentic materials including real recorded conversations, movies, and songs, and integrating four skills wherever possible, especially speaking and writing (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). As the first priority in CLT is the communication of messages and meaning (Lightbown & Spada, 2013), pre-listening in the CLT classroom was primarily used to enable learners to activate their background knowledge and set up the context for better understanding (Underwood, 1989).

Although CLT promoted the development of listening instruction, little attention was given to the ability of learners to consciously control their thoughts, actions, and feelings in order to learn how to listen (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). A strategy-based approach focusing on the concept of learner independence developed to classify learning strategies as an effective approach for listening development (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Mendelsohn, 1995). Current course books follow an integrated approach. They draw upon a range of approaches to teaching listening, and provide a variety of exercises that involve different listening tasks (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). They also include some comprehension-based techniques which focus on product (correct responses to questions) and comprehension (general understanding), and mirror core skills in listening highlighted by CLT and sub-skills such as listening for general comprehension, listening for gist, prediction, and listening

selectively (Brown & Lee, 2015; Field, 2008; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

As a result of these developments, the teaching of listening has become progressively more varied, and also more important in L2 learning over the last fifty years (Goh, 2008; Siegel, 2013a; Vandergrift, 2007). Communication with other speakers and access to a range of different multimedia such as the Internet and international channels on television (e.g. BBC, VOA) require a good command of listening. It is now generally acknowledged that listening ability can also facilitate L2 learning (Gary, 1975; Krashen, 1985; Vandergrift, 1999), and the development of the other language skills such as speaking and reading (Feyten, 1991; Oxford, 1993; Richards, 2005). It is also accepted that comprehensible input is vital for L2 acquisition (Krashen, 1985; Brown, 2017), and that listening can play a critical role in providing learners with this type of input. Some scholars claim that one of the main differences between less and more successful learners is the extent to which they use listening as part of L2 acquisition (Dunkel, 1991; Rost, 2013; Vandergrift, 2007).

Listening is also considered to be a challenging macro-skill for practitioners to teach, and for learners to develop (Kurita, 2012; Vandergrift, 2004). Underwood (1989) listed seven possible sources of difficulty in L2 real world listening: absence of control over the speed of delivery, lack of opportunities for repetition, insufficient contextual knowledge, limited repertoire of vocabulary, failure to recognize signals (e.g. discourse markers, pauses, and loudness), inability to concentrate in the L2, and ineffective learning habits (e.g. intolerance of incomplete understanding). Learners' difficulties can be due to their limited linguistic proficiency (Goh, 2002; Stæhr, 2009, Vandergrift & Baker, 2015), limited background knowledge (Herron, 1994; Schmidt-Rinehart, 1994), lack of, or underdeveloped teacher education programs for teaching

L2 listening (Graham, Santos, & Vanderplank, 2011; Siegel, 2013a), and lack of support for listening instruction in textbooks (Field, 2012).

A study was conducted by Chang, Wu, and Pang (2013) in Taiwan and 1056 college students participated in the study by filling out a questionnaire. The study identified six factors as sources of listening difficulties for L2 learners. These included text factors (e.g. unknown words, grammar, and long sentences), input quality and surroundings (e.g. noise in the classroom), relevance (e.g. uninteresting topics), listener affective factors (e.g. anxiety), speaker factors (e.g. speech rate, pronunciation, and accent), and task characteristics (e.g. absence of repetition). Vandergrift (2007) also emphasizes methodological deficiencies in listening instruction, and suggested that learners are not being educated about how to listen efficiently. As a result, listening can be a source of anxiety (Elkhafaifi, 2005; Zhang, 2013), and a challenging skill for both learners and instructors to master (Graham et al., 2011).

The following sub-sections will discuss five strands of research to date on listening pedagogy: the effects of different approaches on teaching listening (comprehension, analytic, and synthetic approaches), recommended formats for listening instruction, the use of authentic materials, listening assessment, and research into teacher cognition with regard to listening instruction.

2.1.1 Comprehension based and analytic approaches to teaching listening

Pedagogical approaches to listening instruction have developed significantly over the last fifty years (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Siegel, 2013b). The earliest method of teaching was based on osmosis, or absorption of meaning through exposure according to core principles of the audio-lingual method. This was followed by the comprehension approach in which teachers

made extensive use of questions, which they expected learners to respond to by using discrete items of information in the spoken text. More recently, the focus has shifted from product to process, and researchers have tried to define and develop listening sub-skills (strategies) to support learners' comprehension (Field, 2008; Richards, 1983; Vandergrift, 2004). They have also advocated the teaching of metacognitive and cognitive strategies to improve listening skills (Goh, 2008, Graham, 2017). In spite of discrepancies between approaches, such as placing more emphasis on the process or product of listening, teaching listening strategies, or providing exposure to a large amount of L2 input to improve listening ability, the ultimate goal of all approaches is to enable learners to comprehend samples of L2 listening more effectively and effortlessly. There are a number of pedagogic options for teaching listening, and the underlying assumptions and caveats of some of the approaches that have been in use over the past fifty years or so are outlined in the following paragraphs.

Osmosis, comprehension, extensive listening, and diagnosis

In the early 1960s, at the time when listening skills received little research attention and listening was considered a passive or receptive skill, it was thought that learners would improve their listening ability just by listening to the target language (Osada, 2004; Oxford, 1993). According to the osmosis approach, which was grounded in the audio-lingual method, it was assumed that listening skill develops automatically through recurrent exposure to L2 input and experience (Cauldwell, 2013; Mendelsohn, 1998). Due to the lack of explicit teaching of listening skills and neglect of the importance of teaching listening perception processes (Cauldwell, 2013), osmosis was labelled a “non-approach” (Siegel, 2015) and was replaced by the comprehension approach.

The comprehension approach emphasized comprehension instead of production as the first priority. It was strongly associated with Asher's Total Physical Response (1965) in which learners tried to acquire the L2 through action-based drills in response to commands issued by the teacher, and the Natural Approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1983) in which learners developed second language skills through exposure to comprehensible input and meaningful practice activities with little reference to grammatical analysis and drills. In teaching listening, the comprehension approach was based on the assumption that learners become competent listeners in the L2 only through exposure to a large number of spoken texts. Field (2008) enumerated the advantages and disadvantages of this approach, noting that it tended to be teacher-centred, was based on more practice rather than better understanding, was less communicative, and was derived from assumptions developed for the teaching of reading. However, it did give learners exposure to authentic (natural) listening samples, as well as providing practice in listening for meaning, and preparing learners to pass international tests of listening.

Strong links exist between research into the skills of listening and reading. Reading researchers have confirmed the beneficial effects of extensive reading on the acquisition of reading skills (Bamford & Day, 1998, Day & Bamford, 2002; Yamashita, 2008), and it has been argued that "just like reading, listening is best learnt through listening" (Renandya & Farrell, 2010, p. 5). Extensive listening, grounded in the same theory as extensive reading, refers to listening to significant amounts of easy, enjoyable, meaningful, and comprehensible input that can improve learners' listening skill as aural input is processed automatically, accurately, and fluently (Chang & Millett, 2013; Renandya & Farrell, 2010). In addition, some researchers have argued that combining extensive reading and listening is clearly valuable to learners, because it results in more comprehensible input (Chang & Millett, 2013; Stephen, 2010; Woodall, 2010). Three

factors emphasized in extensive listening are variety (various topics and themes), frequency (to be practiced frequently), and repetition (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). While extensive listening shows beneficial effects in improving listening skills, it has been criticized for underestimating the critical role of teachers, and for overemphasizing listening input rather than instructional procedures (Siegel, 2013b).

In the so-called diagnostic approach (Field, 2008), responses to questions are the main sources of information that help instructors to understand learners' listening difficulties. Teachers then try to diminish them by using different strategies. In cases of correct response, instructors evaluate how the answer was achieved; if the response is incorrect, they try to trace the origin of the learner's listening difficulties (Field, 2008). Among the criticisms of the diagnostic approach were the practical difficulties involved in discovering each learner's problems, and the teacher's dependence on continuous, consistent feedback from learners (Field, 2008).

Analytic approaches

Analytic approaches denote the way in which listening input is processed, and focus on listening for details. They refer to understanding at a sound or word level before understanding of larger units is attempted. Findings of studies into L2 listening pedagogy demonstrate that improving word recognition skills and prosodic cues (e.g. stress and intonation) through analytic (bottom-up) processing are extremely important (Goh, 2017; Hulstijn, 2003; Kurita, 2012), especially to improve word recognition, and to draw learners' attention to other aspects of oral input such as assimilation, elision, and reduced forms (Field, 2003; Vandergrift, 2007). Since many high-level breakdowns in communication (e.g. at the discourse level, or misinterpretations of the text as a whole) derive from low-level errors (e.g. inability to

understand the meaning or pronunciation of some words or syllable segments), teaching and practicing bottom-up processing can have beneficial effects on listening skills.

Bottom-up approaches to teaching listening can take different forms such as “i-1 level texts” (Hulstijn, 2001), where learners can identify most of words in the text; dictation; analogy, which notes the small differences between the oral and written form of the input; remedial exercises; and analysis of parts of the text transcripts (Field, 2005; Goh, 2002; Hulstijn, 2001). For example, a reduced speech rate for listening input and dictogloss can make learners focus on overcoming listening problems, finding their errors and evaluating the importance of errors (Jensen & Vinther, 2003; Wilson, 2003), and frequent dictation have beneficial effects on the listening comprehension ability of learners by improving decoding skill of foreign speech, strengthening learners’ memory, and raising their awareness of phonological features of the text input such as pronunciation and stress (Kiany & Shiramiry, 2002).

The importance of vocabulary knowledge or word recognition in the skill of listening is widely acknowledged (e.g. Bonk, 2000; Vandergrift, 2006). The results of research into the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and L2 listening comprehension have provided evidence that higher listening test scores are associated with vocabulary knowledge (Andringa et al., 2012; Stæhr, 2009; Vandergrift & Baker, 2015). Stæhr (2009) investigated the effects of vocabulary breadth (vocabulary size) and depth (how well words are known) on listening comprehension. He reported that these two factors accounted for 51 percent of the variance in listening scores; however, vocabulary size contributed to greater variance in comprehension. In addition to items of vocabulary, learners’ knowledge of idiomatic and metaphorical language can also affect listening comprehension (Littlemore, 2001). While findings corroborate the claim that L2 vocabulary size can improve comprehension, some studies have indicated that

learners can overcome a weaker linguistic base through the use of listening strategies (Graham et al., 2011; Stæhr, 2009). For example, Stæhr (2009) found that around half of the participants (48%) who demonstrated knowledge of fewer than 5000 words were able to score 60 or more on the listening test by using compensation strategies (e.g. using synonyms and guessing meanings). This corroborates the findings of other research that if L2 learners adopt a very strategic approach to the text, they are able to compensate for a weaker linguistic base by inferencing from the content (Bonk, 2000; Graham et al., 2011).

However, Osada (2001) has warned that overemphasizing bottom-up approaches can result in learners' partial failure in listening comprehension. She found that novice learners tended to use mental translation, and the limited capacity of working memory did not support word by word meaning processing. It seems that incorporating a top-down approach can compensate for potential gaps. Generally, it appears that linguistic knowledge and background knowledge interact to make listening input more comprehensible, and a combination of both bottom-up and top-down approaches for L2 listening instruction is likely to have a beneficial effect on listening ability (Graham, 2017; Rost & Wilson, 2013; Nunan, 2002; Vandergrift, 2007).

2.1.2 Synthetic approaches to teaching listening

Listeners' knowledge of various situations, contexts, and texts is also essential for comprehension, and complements the knowledge that can be gained using analytic approaches. Synthetic approaches refer to listening processes that draw on background knowledge (e.g. topic, culture) and context clues to help with comprehension of listening input. They are in contrast to comprehension and analytic approaches, and the underpinning assumptions of these approaches are that learners can be taught how to listen effectively. Synthetic approaches play an important role in developing the skill of comprehending spoken texts in the L2 (Cross, 2011;

Field, 2004; Vandergrift, 2007), and encompass a range of approaches including sub-skill, process-based, and metacognitive, as well as those that require learners to draw on their prior knowledge.

Sub-skills (strategic) approaches and focus on listening processes

The skill of listening can be divided into sub-skills or strategies: conversational and academic listening skills (Richards, 1983), and cognitive, metacognitive, social and affective strategies (Vandergrift, 1997). Vandergrift and Goh (2012) suggested six core strategies that engage learners with the listening input including listening for details, listening for main ideas, listening for general understanding, listening selectively, listening to deduce, and listening to make predictions. The sub-skills approach can be defined as a set of techniques that support listeners as they attempt to comprehend spoken input (Field, 2008). However, it has been criticized for not providing sufficient evidence regarding the beneficial effects of teaching strategies, and on account of difficulties in defining key sub-skills (Renandya & Farrell, 2010; Ridgway, 2000). Other concerns, as expressed by Field (2008), are the transferability of sub-skills into real contexts, and the difficulty of demonstrating gains in listening ability, especially over a short period of time.

The process-based approach is based on strategy instruction, and its main aim is to teach learners how to listen (Mendelsohn, 1995). It involves raising learners' awareness of the strategies that they use (e.g. cognitive or metacognitive strategies), and instruction in how to apply appropriate strategies to overcome specific listening difficulties (Mendelsohn, 1995). Siegel (2013b), who promoted this approach, recommends process-based listening instruction as a way of avoiding involvement in discussion of terminology such as the difference between strategy and skill. It emphasizes classroom practices such as raising students' awareness of a

particular aspect of listening, and providing extensive practice opportunities (Siegel, 2013b). The essential assumption of this approach is that the skill of listening is an amalgam of different, independent components (e.g. planning, monitoring, inferencing, elaboration, and summarizing) which can be recognized and explicitly taught and practiced.

Developing metacognitive strategies

Another type of synthetic approach emphasizes the teaching of listening strategies. Language learning strategies can be divided into cognitive, metacognitive, and social and affective strategies (Chamot, 1993; Vandergrift, 1997). The term “cognitive strategies” refers to unconscious strategies such as inferencing, elaboration, repetition, and summarization, whereas use of metacognitive strategies involves conscious control over the learning process such as planning, monitoring, evaluation, and problem solving (Vandergrift, 1997). Social and affective strategies such as questioning, cooperating with peers, and reducing anxiety involve interacting with others and applying techniques related to feelings in order to foster learning (Oxford, Lavine & Crookall, 1989; Vandergrift, 1997, 2003).

Many attempts have been made to address learners’ needs and help them to cope with the demands of listening using strategies, and the findings of this strand of research show that systematic instruction in this area can improve listening comprehension (Mendelsohn, 1995, 1998; Thompson & Rubin, 1996). Concerning metacognitive strategies, some researchers have argued that raising listeners’ awareness that metacognitive strategies can have beneficial effects on their comprehension in different ways, such as enhancing learners’ confidence and motivation and alleviating their anxiety. These strategies improve listening performance, especially in the case of novice listeners, and the use of a range of metacognitive strategies can also lead to effective, directed use of cognitive strategies to make sense of the spoken input

(Goh, 2008; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Vandergrift et al. (2006) found that approximately 13 percent of variance in listening performance can be attributed to the effect of applying metacognitive strategies.

In spite of the beneficial effects of metacognitive instructions on listening comprehension, Goh (2008) and Vandergrift, (2007) have pointed out that only a limited number of classroom-based studies in this area have been conducted over the last two decades. From the findings of several of these studies (Bozorgian, 2012; Goh & Taib, 2006; Newton, 2016; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010; Yeldham & Gruba, 2016) we have learned that learners who received metacognitive instructions significantly outperformed groups that completed listening activities without directed attention to process, and that novice listeners in particular could make good gains in listening performance as a result of instruction. On the other hand, a number of scholars have expressed reservations about the effects of, and the amount time that needs to be devoted to, strategy training and the possibility that, as a result, insufficient time will be spent in the classroom on critically important listening practice (Cross, 2011; McDonough, 2006; Littlejohn, 2008; Renandya & Farrell, 2010; Swan & Walter, 2017).

Activating prior knowledge

Another synthetic approach encourages learners to draw on their prior knowledge. Research has revealed that activating listeners' background knowledge and integrating new knowledge with prior knowledge can facilitate the comprehension of new materials (Elkhafaifi, 2005; Gass, 2013; Herron, 1994; Sadighi & Zare, 2006; Schmidt-Rinheart, 1994). Understanding listening texts therefore involves more than comprehension of words and sentences using linguistic knowledge, and other influential factors such as prior knowledge of the world and the topic also need to be taken into account (Brown & Lee, 2015; Gass, 2013; Tyler, 2001).

The critical role of stimulating prior knowledge in simplifying the process of L2 listening comprehension has long been acknowledged (Chiang & Dunkel, 1992; Long, 1990; Schmidt-Rinehart, 1994), as has the fact that it can be achieved through a range of different forms of advance organizers such as facilitating classroom discussion, providing cultural background, using pictures, presenting key vocabulary, or asking preview questions which can activate listeners' background knowledge (Vandergrift, 2007).

Investigations into the effects of activating background knowledge show that learners' listening comprehension is significantly better for a familiar topic than an unfamiliar one, and that providing listeners with familiar topics can assist comprehension (Chang & Read, 2006; Sadighi & Zare, 2006; Schmidt-Rinehart, 1994). Furthermore, prior knowledge can be triggered by eliciting information about the topic by means of question preview in the pre-listening phase to enhance listening comprehension (Hayati, 2009; Samian & Dastjerdi, 2012). Although learners' background knowledge can facilitate listening comprehension, it can also interfere with comprehension, or mislead the listener (Gass, 2013; Long 1990; Vandergrift, 2007). Macaro, Vanderplank, and Graham (2005) have pointed out that listeners' reliance on prior knowledge may result in inaccurate comprehension when their early assumptions are not in line with supporting evidence that appears later in the text. More skilled listeners use a combination of background knowledge and questions that they ask themselves about what they are hearing to evaluate the extent to which their interpretations are in line with evidence that appears later in the text to improve comprehension (Vandergrift, 2003).

Key-words and prediction

As discussed above with regard to activating learners' background knowledge, advance organizers can be beneficial to learners (Graham, 2017). Two types of advance organizers

strongly emphasized in listening instruction are the teaching of key sentences and vocabulary (Jafari, & Hashim, 2012; Chung & Huang, 1998), and prediction (Graham et al., 2014). On the whole, studies into the effect of advance organizers suggest that they improve learners' general comprehension; however, their long-term benefits for listening improvement are not clear (Graham, 2017). A study by Jafari and Hashim (2012) in a university in Iran showed that teaching key words and phrases as an advance organizer had a significant influence on students' listening comprehension. Prediction has also become an effective classroom practice in the pre-listening phase (Graham, 2017). Studies have shown that teachers draw upon prediction by asking learners to predict vocabulary that might occur in the text (Graham et al. 2014; Lynch & Mendelsohn, 2002; Siegel, 2013a), and learners are encouraged to follow this approach before listening in order to enhance comprehension (Graham et al., 2011).

2.1.3 Scholarly recommended formats for listening instruction

Listening practice is conventionally divided into three phases: pre-listening, listening, and post listening (Brown & Lee, 2015; Field, 2008; Richards & Burns, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Each phase considers different aspects of listening skills and strategies to help learners to improve their skills. The recommended format of listening is grounded in an integrated approach which characterises a variety of exercises following a comprehension approach, CLT, and a strategy-based approach (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). These three phases are also in line with Newton's five core components of an effective listening program (2009, 2016): extensive meaning-focused listening (i.e. making sense of messages), guided diagnosis of miscomprehension (i.e. identifying sources of miscomprehensions or specific listening sub-skills), skills training and practice (i.e. paying attention to bottom-up skills), strategy training (i.e. comprehension and listening strategies), and links to listening beyond the classroom practices.

In the pre-listening phase, teachers activate learners' background knowledge by generating questions to elicit learners' ideas, providing necessary vocabulary support by teaching words that are essential to the meaning of the text, establishing reasons for listening through setting questions beforehand, and identifying the listening demands and context (Field, 2008; Harmer, 2007; Richards & Burns, 2012; Rost & Wilson, 2013). Additionally, it is acknowledged that teaching some strategies by having learners think explicitly about monitoring, predicting, and evaluating their listening can be helpful (Richards & Burns, 2012; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010). Findings support the claim that metacognitive activities initiated by teachers can be used with other activities in common textbooks before or after listening (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). The pre-listening phase is usually quite short to avoid giving learners so much information that they could answer any comprehension questions without needing to attend to the spoken text (Wilson, 2008).

Activities assigned for the listening period are considered the most important part of listening instruction (Richards & Burns, 2012), since they can provide learners with an opportunity for extensive listening (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Harmer, 2007) and can help them to practice metacognitive strategies (Mendelsohn, 1994). Activities include addressing learners' misunderstandings and difficulties, listening for gist, listening for details, and checking answers (Field, 2008; Richards & Burns, 2012; Wilson, 2008). During the listening period teachers have the opportunity to diagnose students' listening development and plan post-listening activities.

The post-listening phase includes a variety of exercises such as reviewing learners' comprehension, using the text for language development, replaying the text, inferring new vocabulary, and solving the problems learners encountered while listening to the text (Brown

& Lee, 2015; Rost & Wilson, 2013). Scholars have argued that linking listening with other skills can be done both before and after listening (Rost & Wilson, 2013). Some believe that integrating listening with other skills as a response or follow-up provides learners with an opportunity to examine the text for salient features such as grammar, vocabulary, discourse markers, and pronunciation (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Rost & Wilson, 2013; Wilson, 2008). By and large, post-listening activities primarily focus on the process of listening, and corroborate Field's (2008) claim that this phase includes a wide range of activities primarily targeting listening processes.

Despite recent advances in studying listening, there is a relatively limited number of classroom-based studies that provide empirical evidence for the effectiveness of different aspects of listening instruction (Graham, 2017; Janusik, 2010; Siegel, 2013a). One of the limited number of empirical studies into listening pedagogy to date (Siegel, 2013a) investigated approaches and classroom practices of EFL instructors in Japan (three Japanese teachers and seven who were native-speakers of English). Its main findings showed that all teachers used comprehension questions as their main strategy during the different phases of listening instruction. The results of the study support the findings of another classroom-based study in Taiwanese high schools that the most common classroom practices were based on a comprehension approach (Lia & Yeldham, 2015). The results also confirm the claim by a number of scholars (Goh, 2010; Field, 2008; Wilson, 2008) that listening pedagogy is characterised by the common three-phase format, pre-listening, listening, and post listening, and is largely based on the comprehension approach. Analytic and synthetic approaches (e.g. dictation, script reading) and instruction in metacognitive strategies (e.g. predicting before listening, planning what to emphasize while listening) were two other common practices used by teachers in the Siegel (2013a) study. Both of these are also emphasized in the literature on

listening (Field, 2008; Goh & Taib, 2006; Hulstijn, 2003; Kurita, 2012; Vandergrift and Goh; 2012); however, the issue needs further investigation in a range of ESL and EFL contexts in order to provide information about customary practices with regard to listening pedagogy, and to explore how, and the extent to which, contextual factors can influence teachers' approaches and classroom practices.

2.1.4 Using authentic materials

Although there has been extensive discussion in the literature as to the meaning of authenticity with regard to L2 instruction, it is generally agreed that it involves an evaluation of some characteristics that a text must have to be considered authentic such as being produced by a real speaker to convey a real message or by a native speaker in a specific language context (Morrow, 1977; Porter & Roberts, 1981). It also deals with the kind of interaction that learners may be asked to have with the text (Gilmore, 2007; Krajka, 2015; Morrow, 1977). There is some consensus among researchers about the benefits of using authentic materials (as opposed to pre-scripted materials) on improving learners' communicative competence (Brown & Lee, 2015; Gilmore, 2011; Roberts & Cooke, 2009; Ur, 2012). In terms of the skill of listening, if the main aim of instruction is to help learners to improve their comprehension in real situations, authentic materials would be appropriate to help achieve this goal (Field, 1998; Guariento & Morley, 2001; Miller, 2003).

First, authentic texts expose learners to a range of language, and to features that echo the characteristics of natural speech such as false starts and hesitations (Field, 1998, 2008; Vandergrift, 2007). Authentic materials are also potentially very motivating with regard to addressing learners' needs and interests and reducing their anxiety about being evaluated, as the main concern is communication, not evaluating learners' listening skills (Gilmore, 2011;

Vandergrift, 2003, 2007). Findings of empirical studies confirm the beneficial effects of authentic oral texts on listening comprehension (Gilmore, 2011; Gallien, 2001). For example, Thanajaro (2000) and Herron and Seay (1991) found that students who were exposed to authentic materials outperformed those students who were provided with only listening practice tasks. Authentic materials can improve listening skills by intensifying students' comfort level and self-confidence, and increasing their motivation to learn (Thanajaro, 2000). Gilmore (2011) has also argued that authentic materials raise learners' awareness of phonological aspects of language (e.g. intonation, assimilation, and linking). Unlike common textbook materials, which feature a slower speech rate and simplified oral texts, authentic materials increase learners' proficiency in the context of real communication.

Although researchers generally agree about the beneficial effects of authentic materials on the skill of listening, there is less agreement about when they should be implemented in the classroom. For example, Guariento and Morley (2001) believe that applying even relatively simple authentic tasks at a lower level may demoralize learners, since the text may be difficult and beyond learners' level and they cannot understand the text or respond meaningfully. Although other scholars argue that judicious use of authentic materials, even with Beginners, can make learners aware of the real rhythms and characteristics of the target language (Field, 1998, 2008, Richards, 2006). However, finding truly authentic materials that are accessible to low-proficiency learners is difficult (Richards, 2006). It seems that, after being familiarized with authentic features of target language and the motivating nature of authentic materials, learners at different levels can benefit from these materials to achieve higher degrees of independence in communicating in real contexts (e.g. Field, 1998, 2008; Gilmore, 2007; Miller, 2003).

2.1.5 Listening assessment

Language assessment in general and listening assessment in particular have employed three main approaches to date: discrete-point, integrative, and communicative (Buck, 2001). Discrete-point testing is based on the assumption that language knowledge can be divided into a number of independent elements such as grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation, pronunciation, and stress which can be tested by pure items (e.g. multiple-choice tests). In contrast, integrative testing maintains that since language use requires the coordination of many kinds of knowledge in a linguistic event, items which combine those kinds of knowledge, such as comprehension tasks, speaking, and listening should be utilized. This type overlaps to some extent with communicative testing, which argues that language tests must measure how language users are able to use language in real life situations. The skill of listening may be assessed in each of these ways depending on the purpose. However, a number of scholars and researchers (Buck 2002; Chang & Read, 2013; Vandergrift & Goh, 2009) have noted some important issues in assessing listening, which include item difficulty, mode of input, replaying the text, and the use of assessment for formative and summative purposes.

Concerning item difficulty, some researchers claim that it plays an insignificant role (Freedle & Kostin 1999; Kostin, 2004). Freedle and Kostin (1999) analysed different characteristics of the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) listening test and found that two factors are more important than item characteristics: whether the intended information came at the beginning of questions or in the middle, and the extent to which there was overlap in wording between the text, distractors, and the correct answers. However, other scholars have argued that some kinds of listening tests are intrinsically easier than others (Eykyn, 1992; Teng, 1998; Cheng, 2004). Eykyn (1992) compared multiple-choice items with other task types (choose a picture, wh-questions, vocabulary lists), Teng (1998) compared these items with cloze and

short answer questions, and Cheng (2004) compared different types of multiple-choice tests. The results of all three studies indicated that participants responded better to multiple-choice items, and performed best on the multiple-choice cloze listening assessments.

The issue of mode of input in listening assessment has also been investigated (Vandergrift, 2007; Vandergrift & Goh, 2009). Coniam (2001) studied the performance of two groups of participants who listened to an audio and a video version of an educational conversation, and found that the participants who listened to the audio version performed better. In addition, over 80 percent of listeners felt that the video version did not facilitate comprehension. However, learners and instructors have considered using a visual supplement to a spoken text as a valid assessment in academic contexts as it can evaluate academic listening in a more realistic academic way than an audio test (Feak & Salehzadeh, 2004). Wagner (2007) pointed out that although listeners paid attention to the video instead of reading materials, they did not consider video-texts distracting during assessment. Similarly, with regard to oral or written forms of test items, Taiwanese students scored approximately the same in both oral and written multiple-choice test modes (Chang & Read, 2013).

With regard to repetitions of the spoken text, there is no consensus on whether allowing learners to listen to a spoken text twice rather than just playing once is helpful or not, as there are strong arguments in support of each approach (Buck 2002; Geranpayeh, & Taylor, 2008). Some scholars have argued that playing twice can compensate for the lack of contextual and visual supports (Boroughs, 2003; Geranpayeh, & Taylor, 2013); however, others believe that it compromises authenticity (Gilmore, 2004; Jones, 2013). Ruhm et al., (2016) studied the performance of 1266 students on different listening tests, according to item difficulty and length, and found that a second opportunity for listening had beneficial effects on listening to

short texts. Concerning item difficulty, they found that when 70% of test-takers can answer an item correctly, replaying the text does not improve their results. It is clear that, with regard to replays of the text, factors such as students' proficiency and test characteristics need to be taken into account (Geranpayeh & Taylor, 2008).

2.1.6 Summary

Although the teaching of listening as a distinct and critical skill for L2 learning has been explored by researchers, scholars and practitioners over the last fifty years and the volume of research has increased in recent years, listening is still the least researched, and probably the least understood of the four macro-skills. Initially, scholarship and practice with regard to listening were influenced by theories of reading and writing instruction; however, listening pedagogy changed with the development of CLT, and the subsequent emphasis on listening as a component of effective oral communication. Findings of recent empirical studies into listening pedagogy indicate that listening instruction has shifted away from focusing on products (correct responses) by using osmosis or comprehension approaches to process-based and strategic (cognitive and metacognitive) approaches. Following this, teachers have placed more emphasis on the process of listening (how learners come to correct responses) and taught the skill based on the underlying assumption that students can learn how to apply suitable strategies to tackle specific listening difficulties. In addition, the potential benefits of the combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches, which can enhance learners' general listening, have been asserted. The benefits of incorporating authentic materials into teaching the skill of listening have been emphasized.

Teacher cognition also has a role to play in teachers' choices with regard to listening. Since this study is interested in exploring listening pedagogy and teacher cognition with regard to

listening, it will investigate potential factors which shape teacher cognition with the aim of contributing to current knowledge of both topics: how teachers instruct with regard to listening, and their cognitions about listening. In particular, the present study aims to address these questions in an EFL context in which specific constraints affecting both teachers and learners are evident. In order to contextualize the study into teachers' cognitions and practices in Iran, teacher cognition and the Iranian context will be presented in the following two sections of this chapter.

2.2 Teacher cognition

Conceptualizations of teaching in general, and conceptualisations with regard to language teacher cognition in particular, have changed considerably over the last half century. They have shifted and broadened from an emphasis on observable behaviour that might illustrate underlying beliefs to include more over attention on teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and decision-making processes (Fang, 1996; Burns, Freeman, & Edwards, 2015). This change affirms that researchers are now aware that what teachers believe and know shapes their classroom practices, and that understanding teachers' cognitions is therefore essential to understanding their practices (Borg, 2015). Research into teacher cognition has been conducted from three main perspectives: behaviourist, cognitivist, and social (context-bound).

During the early 1970s, research aimed "to define relationships between what teachers do in the classroom (the process of teaching) and what happens to their students (the products of teaching)" (Anderson, Evertson & Brody 1979, p. 193), and a number of studies examined how teachers' behaviours affected students' achievement (Borg, 2015; Fang, 1996). Teachers were considered doers or implementers of externally produced ideas concerning curriculum, methodology and student learning, and the influence on teachers' knowledge of factors such as

background, social context, and experience was not usually considered (Freeman, 2002). However, this conceptualization was soon challenged as only a partial and naive representation of teaching, which resulted in a shift in perspective from behaviourist to cognitive in the 1980s (Borg, 2015; Freeman, 2002). This decade was characterised by a reconceptualization of teachers and their mental lives, and concepts such as “pedagogical content knowledge”, “assumptions”, “beliefs”, and teaching as a decision-making process emerged (Freeman, 2002). Borg (2015) attributed this shift to three main factors. First, cognitive psychology asserted the effects of deliberate thinking on action. Second, teachers’ essential role in shaping what goes on in the lessons they teach began to be acknowledged. And thirdly, by this time a number of limitations in identifying generalizable models of teacher efficiency through process-product studies had been documented.

The above noted changes helped teachers to comprehend better the complexities of teachers’ beliefs and knowledge, and their influence on how they teach in various contexts (Johnson, 2006). Teaching is not a cognitive activity that exists only in teachers’ minds, nor does it occur in isolation away from interactions between teachers and learners, or from events and circumstances beyond the classrooms in terms of planning and decision-making responsibilities (Pennycok, 2000; Tudor, 2003). It is mediated by a range of cultural, economic, historical, and institutional factors in specific contexts (Crookes, 1997; Lasky, 2005; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004). Johnson (2006) noted that the shift to include sociocultural perspectives in different intellectual disciplines has generated the reconceptualization of teacher cognition from a purely cognitive activity to one that includes social perspectives on human learning that regard such learning as a dynamic social activity, carried out in particular social and physical contexts.

As a result of this new understanding, studies into teacher cognition began to address different aspects of the contextualized nature of teacher cognition. Teachers' conceptualizations and constructions of their experience as learners and teachers, their previous knowledge, and their personal beliefs were all considered, as well as the way they interacted with "macro- and micro-level contextual factors in their classrooms, schools, and communities" (Freeman & Richards, 1996, p.5).

2.2.1 Components of the construct of teacher cognition

It is now generally recognized that most teachers think deeply about all aspects of their work (Borg, 2003), and that their cognitions relate to learners and learning, themselves and the essence of teaching, teaching, learning to teach, and subject matter and curriculum (Calderhead, 1996). The fundamental assumption of studies into teacher cognition is that teachers' mental lives exert a significant effect on their teaching approach and classroom practices. Teacher cognition has been investigated through different psychological constructs that include beliefs, knowledge (e.g. content knowledge, personal practical knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge), their decisions, and principles. The proliferation of terms used by researchers suggests that this complex concept is difficult to define. As noted in Chapter One, this study will use one clear, comprehensive definition of teacher cognition that encompasses all the non-observable, cognitive processes that inform teachers' practices: "what teachers know, think, and believe and how these relate to what teachers do" (Borg & Burns, 2008, p. 457).

Knowledge is fundamental to teacher cognition. Like any other profession, teaching draws on a wide range of specialized knowledge, and teachers need to know how to present knowledge in a way that fosters learning. However, content knowledge is only one component of teacher

cognition, and teachers also possess (and develop) general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values, as well as their philosophical and historical foundations (Shulman 1987, p.8). While all of these are essential for effective teaching, pedagogical content knowledge, which relates to knowledge about how to teach a subject to a specific group of students in a specific context, is considered particularly important, and has been the focus of a number of studies (e.g. Gatbonton, 2000, 2008; Golombek, 1998; Mullock, 2006). Pedagogical content knowledge encompasses the strategies, practices, and aims that shape teachers' classroom practices, and investigation of this knowledge can shed light on important attitudes, values, and beliefs (Gatbonton, 2000; Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 1999; Mullock, 2006).

Another component of teacher cognition is beliefs, which are shaped gradually through experience and education (Johnson, 1994; Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Although there is no agreement among scholars about what distinguishes beliefs from knowledge, Nespor (1987) identified four characteristics of beliefs: existential presumption, alternativity, affective and evaluative aspects, as well as episodic storage. Existential presumptions refer to inconvertible and personal facts that everyone holds, and alternatively notes individuals' attempts in making a situation different from realities. Nespor (1987) pointed out that beliefs are more closely connected to affective and evaluative aspects of cognition than knowledge. He also noted that while knowledge is semantically accumulated, beliefs rely on episodic storage with information obtained from experience and cultural sources of knowledge transmission. However, with regard to language teaching and learning, Kagan (1992) contends that a good deal of teachers' personal knowledge can be more precisely regarded as beliefs, while Pajares (1992) argues that beliefs are more influential than knowledge. However, it is the view of a

number of scholars that the main distinction is not between beliefs and knowledge, but between personal, professional knowledge that is non-systematic and based on experience and intuition on the one hand, and, on the other, disciplinary knowledge that has been documented and is considered legitimate on the basis of research evidence (Burns, 1996; Kagan, 1992). Figure 4 shows the relationship between different facets of the construct of teacher cognition.

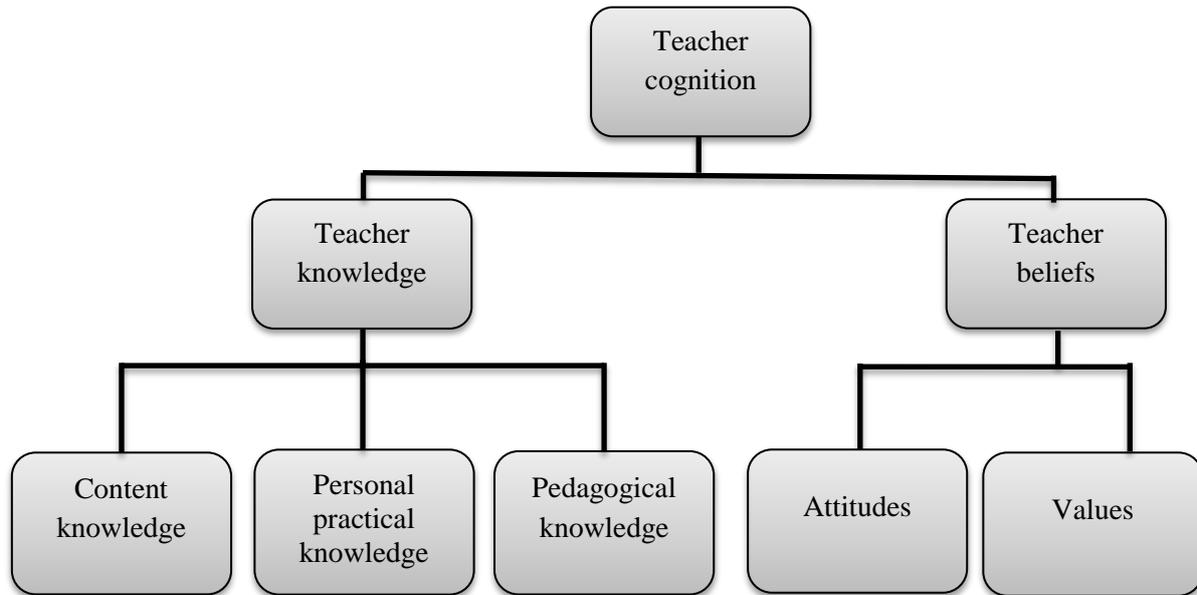


Figure 4: A conceptual framework of teacher cognition

The existing literature on teacher cognition informed the researcher to design the above conceptual framework to illustrate different components of teacher cognition as an umbrella term in the current study. Therefore, what teachers said about their listening classroom practices in the findings chapters refers to the two key components of teacher cognition: knowledge and beliefs.

2.3 Teacher cognition in second language (L2) teaching and learning

During the 1960s and 1970s, study into teacher cognition with regard to L2 teaching and learning received little attention; however, more recently it has been reemphasized (Brown,

2009; Richardson, 1996). Research into this strand of L2 pedagogy has been influenced by the assumption that teachers' cognitions about language teaching and learning and their thinking processes before, during and after instruction are highly likely to influence their teaching approaches and classroom practices (Breen, 1991; Horwitz, 1988; Richards & Lockhart, 1996). It has also followed similar research interests in general education with regard to these topic areas: the shaping influences of teacher cognition such as experience (comparing experts and novices) (Golombek 1998; Johnson, 1994), the effects of contextual constraints (Crookes, 1997; Wette, 2010) and comparisons of beliefs with classroom practices (Breen et al., 2001; Burns 1996). Other studies have focused on the effects of teacher education programs (Busch, 2010; Farrell, 2009), or on cognition with regard to specific aspects of L2 teaching (e.g. grammar) (Borg, 1999). Teachers' accounts of their beliefs, knowledge, and teaching practices have been described in several edited volumes (see Humphries & Burns, 2015; Johnson & Golombek, 2002; Richards, 1998).

The following sub-sections will discuss five main strands of research to date on teacher cognition: pre-service and in-service teacher cognition about language teaching and learning, the relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practices, factors influencing teacher cognition and classroom practices, teacher cognition with regard to communicative language teaching, and teacher cognition with regard to receptive skills.

2.3.1 Pre-service and in-service teachers' cognition about language learning

Teachers' cognitions about language teaching and instruction can be quite idiosyncratic, both within and between groups of pre-service and in-service teachers. To explore the extent and type of differences with regard to pre-service teachers, Johnson (1994) drew on journal entries, observations, and interviews with four pre-service teachers, and found that all had different

ideas about L2 language teachers and L2 teaching. They were critical of their own instructional practices, but they did not know how to change due to a lack of experience. Similarly, Diab (2009) studied 12 pre-service EFL teachers enrolled in a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) Teaching Diploma program. Diab (2009) found that they held various beliefs regarding language teaching and learning; however, some beliefs were considered as an obstacle to successful language teaching and learning such as not believing “in the existence of a language learning hierarchy” (p. 26).

As well as qualitative investigations, a number of studies have investigated pre-service teachers’ cognitions about language teaching and learning using Horwitz’s (1988) Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) (e.g. Peacock, 2001; Tercanlioglu, 2005; Wong, 2010). Findings of these studies revealed that there was little consensus among pre-service teachers on the five areas of foreign language aptitude which are the difficulty of learning language, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, as well as motivation and expectations, in the BALLI questionnaire. Tercanlioglu (2005) found that motivation was the most important factor for learning another language among Turkish pre-service teachers, while Wong (2010) stated that Malaysian pre-service teachers valued most highly the existence of foreign language aptitude. However, in both studies teachers were strongly in favour of an immersion approach. It shows that pre-service teachers hold various beliefs about second language teaching and learning that can influence their language instruction.

A longitudinal study was conducted by Peacock (2001) into changes in 146 pre-service teachers’ beliefs about language learning by tracking their beliefs over three years in Hong Kong. Teachers were asked to fill out Horwitz’s (1988) BALLI questionnaire at several times

during the study. Peacock found that a number of ideas remained stable, such as the belief that learning another language requires learning new words and grammar, and that language aptitude plays an essential role in learning. However, only participants' beliefs about grammar and vocabulary learning as well as the role of intelligence changed. Wong (2010) also conducted another longitudinal research by studying 25 pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning in Malaysia. The participants were in their first year of their Bachelors degree in education. A questionnaire was administered twice; at the beginning of the course and 14 months later. The results revealed that teachers placed emphasis on pronunciation, vocabulary, and the benefit of practice. The results of Peacock's (2001) and Wong's (2010) longitudinal research studies indicated that teachers' beliefs remain constant over a long period of time but, due to teachers' different beliefs and principles about language learning, these studies revealed different results. For example, Wong (2010) found that pre-service teachers' beliefs about the nature of language learning and language learning difficulty only slightly changed.

Other studies have investigated in-service teacher cognition (Bell, 2005; Breen, 1991; Brown, 2009). Investigations into foreign language teachers' perceptions of effective teaching by Bell (2005) and Brown (2009) found that teachers were in favour of a communicative classroom for effective language teaching and learning and that, in their opinion, grammar should be included in real-world communications. It means that focusing on meaning takes precedence over forms. Breen (1991) found that most teachers believed in the importance of instruction in grammar, vocabulary, error correction, and pronunciation for retention and recalling of new materials for successful learning. Teachers also had a preference for communicative approaches. Although the common feature of all three studies is the emphasis that teachers appeared to place on the

importance of communicative aspects of teaching, their beliefs about classroom practices that they would regard as effective language teaching were quite different.

Comparisons of the cognitions of pre-service and experienced in-service teachers have revealed that experience shapes in-service teachers' beliefs, and that their actions become based on personal understanding of teaching-learning procedures (Breen, 1991). Their views contrasted with those of pre-service teachers, which tend to be based on formal and informal learning experience (e.g. university formal foreign language instruction and living or studying abroad), beliefs about themselves as teachers, and what they have learned from teacher education courses (Johnson, 1994). It is clear that pre-service and in-service teachers have different beliefs; however, these personal beliefs are shared within each group.

2.3.2 Teacher cognition and classroom practices

The relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practices is not entirely straightforward. Many different factors, including the multifaceted nature of teacher cognition, contextual factors and teachers' experiences exert a significant effect on the relationship (Borg, 2003, 2015; Johnson, 2006; Kagan, 1992; Li & Walsh, 2011; Pajares, 1992; Rubie-Davies, Flint, & McDonald, 2012). In his review of studies into teacher cognition over four decades, Borg (2015) noted that more than 550 studies into different aspects of teacher cognition and classroom practices have been carried out to date. The vast majority have focused on either investigating teacher cognition with regard to knowledge growth and change during teacher education courses (Akbari & Dadvand, 2011; Borg, 2011; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Woods & Cakir, 2011), planning and decision-making (Bailey, 1996; Richards, 1998; Ulichny, 1996), or cognition with regard to the curricular areas of grammar and literacy (Borg & Burns 2008; Lee,

2013; Macalister, 2010; Meijer Verloop, & Beijaard, 2001; Poulson, Avramidis, Fox, Medwell, & Wray, 2001).

The studies identified by Borg (2015) have used a range of research methodologies. A large number have been qualitative case studies (e.g. Li & Walsh, 2011; Farrell & Kun, 2008, Phipps & Borg, 2009), while quantitative studies have been used to investigate teacher cognition through large scale surveys (e.g. Bell, 2005; Hüttner, Dalton-Puffer, & Smit, 2013; Peacock, 2001). In terms of methods of data collection, various instruments have been employed including questionnaires (e.g. Allen, 2002; Calderhead, 1996; Wong, 2010), interviews (e.g. Basturkmen, Loewen & Ellis, 2004; Cowie, 2011; Trent, 2011; Wette, 2010), observations (e.g. Humphries & Burns, 2015; Kuzborska, 2011, Mak, 2011), sentence-completion tasks (e.g. Guilloteaux, 2004; Woods & Cakir, 2011), and video-based stimulated recall (e.g. Kuzborska, 2011; Li, 2013; Mangubhai, Marland & Dashwood et al., 2004). These studies show that researchers need to draw upon both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to explore teacher cognition as a complex and multi-faceted construct. In general, these studies have revealed that there is a reciprocal relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practices (e.g. Breen et al., 2001; Li, 2013; Ng & Farrell, 2003). Concerning English language teaching, a growing number of studies have explored relationships between aspects of teachers' cognition and classroom practices in terms of the four traditional language skills (e.g. Breen et al., 2001; Burns, 1992, Woods 1996); knowledge underpinning classroom practices (e.g. Akbari & Dadvand, 2011; Gatbonton, 2008; Mullock, 2006), and teaching practices with regard to teaching grammar (e.g. Borg, 1999; Harper & Rennie, 2009); reading (e.g. El-Okada, 2005; Kuzborska, 2011, Macalister, 2010), writing (e.g. Berry, 2006; Yigitoglu & Belcher, 2014), listening (Bekleyen, 2009; Graham et al., 2014), and speaking (Baleghizadeh & Nasrollahi Shahri, 2014).

The findings of the above research indicate that teacher cognition exerts a significant effect on classroom practices, since it can influence teachers' decisions and shapes the classroom practices that they employ when teaching. They also suggest the complex structure of teachers' cognition involving elements such as beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, and values about language teaching and learning which construct teachers' decision making, instructional behaviours, and classroom practices (Burns, 1996; Woods, 1996). Examination of these studies shows two contrasting perspectives. One is based on the educational literature on decision-making: it explores the background of teachers' interactive decisions and explains effective decision-making procedures (e.g. Breen et al. 2001; Kuzborska, 2011; Li & Walsh, 2011; Ng & Farrell, 2003; Farrell & Bennis, 2013). The other derives from an interest in teachers' personal practical knowledge and scrutinizes a various range of factors including emotions and ethics (e.g. Akbari & Dadvand, 2011; Gatbonton, 2000; 2008; Golombek, 1998; Mullock, 2006). Both perspectives take into account the shaping influence of various aspects of teachers' cognitions on their classroom practices and show their reciprocal relationship. While teacher cognition forms (and informs) classroom practices, teachers' reflections on their classroom practices mutually inform their cognitions (Borg, 2003; Breen et al., 2001; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999).

A number of scholars have investigated teachers' priorities in L2 teaching as they relate to classroom practices (Gatbonton, 2000; Mullock, 2006; Nunan, 1992). Breen (1991) concluded that providing learners with facilitative learning was the main driving force, while Gatbonton (2000) and Mullock (2006) found that language management and knowledge of students was of the greatest importance. In contrast, Nunan (1992) asserted that the amount of teacher talk, the characteristics of instructions and conducting lessons (e.g. setting up and timing) were the main priority for teachers.

Other studies have investigated types of knowledge underpinning teachers' classroom practices. Golombek (1998) used the construct of personal practical knowledge to examine the cognitions of two novice teachers, and traced how personal practical knowledge in the form of four overlapping and interrelating categories (teachers' knowledge about themselves, context, subject matter, and teaching) informed teachers' classroom practices. Findings also revealed that there is an important reciprocal relationship between personal practical knowledge and classroom practices. Mullock (2006) investigated the pedagogical knowledge of four teachers with various amounts of TESOL teaching experience. The results of the study revealed a total of 20 categories of pedagogical thoughts underpinning classroom practices, with language management as the dominant category, followed in importance by knowledge of students. Procedure check was ranked third, followed by progress review and noting of student reactions and behaviour. The study also shed light on the origins of pedagogical knowledge, since all four teachers in the study listed their teacher education course (CELTA), "noneducational work experience in the field of communications" (Mullock, 2006, p. 62), TESOL experience, and self-study as the main sources of their knowledge.

Two empirical studies into the complex relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practice deserve special consideration: the large-scale studies by Breen et al., (2001) and Woods (1996). They provide us with not only detailed understanding of teacher cognition, but also show the complex relationship between teacher cognition and practices, both conceptually and methodologically. The procedures employed for data collection and analysis in these investigations are also instructive for other studies into teacher cognition; for example, with regard to the skill of listening.

One of the most comprehensive studies to date on the relationship between teachers' cognition and classroom practices was carried out by Breen et al., (2001). This study examined the teaching principles and practices of 18 experienced English teachers through class observation and interviews. Findings revealed that individual teachers held specific principles which were enacted through specific classroom practices, and that each teacher's personal understanding of principles and classroom practices was distinctive. At the group level, several principles were shared by most teachers; however, classroom practice analysis showed that these common principles could be realised through different classroom practices. The study shows the diversity among teachers at both individual and group level. It also revealed five superordinate categories of teacher cognition: concerns with the way in which the learner handles the learning process, the learner's specific characteristics, how learning is enhanced through the use of human and material resources existing in the classroom, the subject matter (e.g. what is being taught and learnt), and the particular contributions that teachers can make. These superordinate categories diverged into a range of principles that were realised in different classroom practices by different teachers, class groups, and teaching contexts. It shows that there is not a linear and straightforward relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practices as teachers may conceptualise or put their cognitions into practice by various classroom activities.

Data for Woods' (1996) study were gathered from observations, interviews, video-based stimulated recalls, documents, and teachers' logs. Woods distinguished between external and internal factors that can influence teacher cognition and classroom practices. He found that with regard to external components, contextual factors (e.g. number of students and students' prior learning experience, class common procedures, explicit curriculum and purposes, consideration for time in lesson and course) shaped teachers' decisions. Internal aspects of teacher cognition included keeping sequential and coherent connections between different

pedagogical decisions, understanding how prior decisions can reduce the complexity of the current decision, and managing discrepancies between their own expectations and the outcomes of an activity.

2.3.3 Factors influences teacher cognition and classroom practices

Key influences on teachers' cognition include learners, contextual factors, teachers' learning and teaching experience, and disciplinary knowledge gained from teacher education courses. With regard to learners, studies have indicated that teachers' perceptions of learners' needs, wishes, learning style, and language proficiency level can have significant effects on their use of particular methodologies (Burgess & Etherington, 2002; Nishino, 2012; Richards & Pennington, 1998). Some scholars have found that teachers modify their classroom practices so that they can be more compatible with their students' expectations, FL proficiency and perceived needs (Gorsuch, 2000; Nishino, 2012; Schulz 2001).

A broad range of contextual factors has been identified in the literature as affecting teachers' cognitions and classroom practices. They include mandated curricula, the availability of materials, unrealistic expectations of parents, school regulations, assessment requirements, classroom layout (class size and classroom seating), and financial restrictions (Burgess & Etherington, 2002; Farrell & Lim, 2005; Hu, 2005; Nishino, 2012; Richards & Pennington, 1998; Sato and Kleinssaser, 2004). These contextual factors may constrain teachers from putting particular beliefs or principles about effective L2 teaching into practice, and explain apparent discrepancies between teacher cognition and classroom practices (Basturkmen, 2012; Borg, 2003; Crookes, 1997).

The effect of teaching materials on teacher cognition and classroom practices has also been acknowledged by researchers (Guerrettaz & Johnston, 2013; McGrath, 2013; Tomlinson, 2012; Zacharias, 2005). Teaching materials can play the role of curriculum (i.e., the teaching materials become the curriculum) and influence classroom practices based on the topic, type and organization of classroom discourse (Guerrettaz & Johnston, 2013). Given the essential role of textbooks, some teachers depend on them as the main authority and educational source in classrooms (Tomlinson, 2012). Materials can also cause some discrepancies between prescribed and actual use of textbooks in classrooms based on learners' needs and teachers' pedagogical goals (McGrath, 2013; Katz, 1996; Zacharias, 2005). In a study into teachers' cognitions underlying teaching materials (Zacharias, 2005), findings showed that teachers preferred internationally-published materials to locally-produced ones; however, in many cases teachers did not follow the teaching materials entirely as they made some modifications to contextualize textbooks to suit their students. In a classroom-based study which investigated the role of materials in teaching grammar at a university in the United States, findings revealed that textbooks can shape classroom practices as they can form the curriculum, have effects on students' and teachers' language as well as language learning (Guerrettaz & Johnston, 2013). These findings show that teaching materials potentially influence teacher cognition and classroom practices.

Two other factors that can have an influence on the relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practices are teachers' prior learning, and their teaching experience. Teachers learn how to teach by means of their long experience as learners, or their apprenticeship of observation (Borg, 2009; Lortie, 1975). That is, teachers often adopt teaching practices based on the way they were taught; this experience shapes their cognition and filters their decisions in their own classrooms (Borg, 2003; Kagan, 1992; Mansour, 2009; Moodie, 2016; Pajares,

1992). It has been argued that teachers consciously encourage or overlook some educational practices due to their prior negative or positive experiences as learners (Bailey, Bergthold, Braunstein et al., 1996; Ellis, 2006; Numrich, 1996; Reeve, 2009). Numrich's (1996) study of the content of teachers' diaries, composed over a period of ten weeks, revealed that teachers consciously skipped some educational practices such as error correction and explicit grammar instruction due to their own negative experiences as learners, while advocating incorporation of culture and communicative needs into the curriculum based on positive prior experiences. Ellis (2006) studied 31 teachers involved in teaching ESL to adult learners in Australia, and found that different kinds of learning experience can result in development of both positive and negative perceptions, which in turn influence teachers' preferences for different instructional approaches and strategies.

As well as teachers' experiences as learners, on-going teaching experience also influences their cognitions and classroom practices. Nunan (1992) compared experienced and novice teachers to clarify the possible differences between these two cohorts. He concluded that novice teachers were more preoccupied with issues related to class management, while their experienced counterparts gave more emphasis to the actual teaching. Richards (1998) found that experienced teachers were more able to make improvisations, placing less emphasis on prior teaching planning and drawing more on collaborative decision-making (making moment-by-moment decisions based on interactions with students). With regard to pedagogical knowledge, Gatbonton (2008) found that differences in the number of major pedagogical knowledge categories between two groups regarding language management, students' attitudes, and procedural issues; however, there were differences concerning details; for example, the most strongly emphasized category for novice teachers was student attitudes, while experienced teachers gave more emphasis to language management. Since teachers' pedagogical

knowledge is an important component of teacher cognition that can inform classroom practices, these differences can result in drawing upon different classroom practices in teaching L2. These differences can also be attributed to the effect of teaching experience as an influential factor that can change teachers' cognitions and in turn their classroom practices. Teachers try various classroom practices and change their ideas or priorities based on new experiences over time.

In terms of training courses, it is generally acknowledged that teacher education programs can have a significant effect on teachers' cognition and their preconceptions (Tatto, 1998; Borg, 2011, Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000); however, mixed results have emerged from studies on this topic. For instance, some scholars such as Burri, Baker and Chen (2017), Busch (2010), Clarke (2008), Ferguson and Donno (2003), and Mattheoudakis (2007) have claimed that teacher education can change teachers' cognitions to some extent. On the other hand, other studies (e.g. Borg, 2005; Urmston, 2003; Peacock, 2001) found no clear evidence of modifications in teacher cognition, and teachers' beliefs were quite resistant to change.

To investigate the impact of in-service teacher education courses, Borg (2011) conducted a qualitative longitudinal study to investigate the effects of an eight-week DELTA (Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) education course on the cognition of six in-service teachers. Data from semi-structured interviews, coursework and participants' feedback indicated some effects on teachers' cognitions. The impact of the course was more noticeable with regard to acquainting teachers with their teaching beliefs such as creating more opportunities for student-centred activities, and what learners can take away from a course. Teachers were also able to articulate the beliefs underpinning their teaching activities. The results of this study are in line with the findings of Lamie (2004) that in-service teacher education courses can help teachers to follow an innovation-oriented and communicative

approach in their teaching. The findings of a number of studies show that teacher education programs for pre-service and in-service English teachers play a role in changing teacher cognition (Cabaroğlu & Roberts, 2000; Clarke, 2008; Lamie; 2004; Mattheoudakis, 2007; Scott & Rodgers, 1995). However, Borg (2011) has made the point that education courses cannot lead to fundamental changes in teacher cognition and classroom practices. It seems that teacher education courses cannot be as influential as other factors such contextual elements or teachers' teaching experience in shaping teachers' cognitions and classroom practices. Figure 5 illustrates the relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practices, as well as specific influences on aspects of teacher cognition, learners, and on the teaching context.

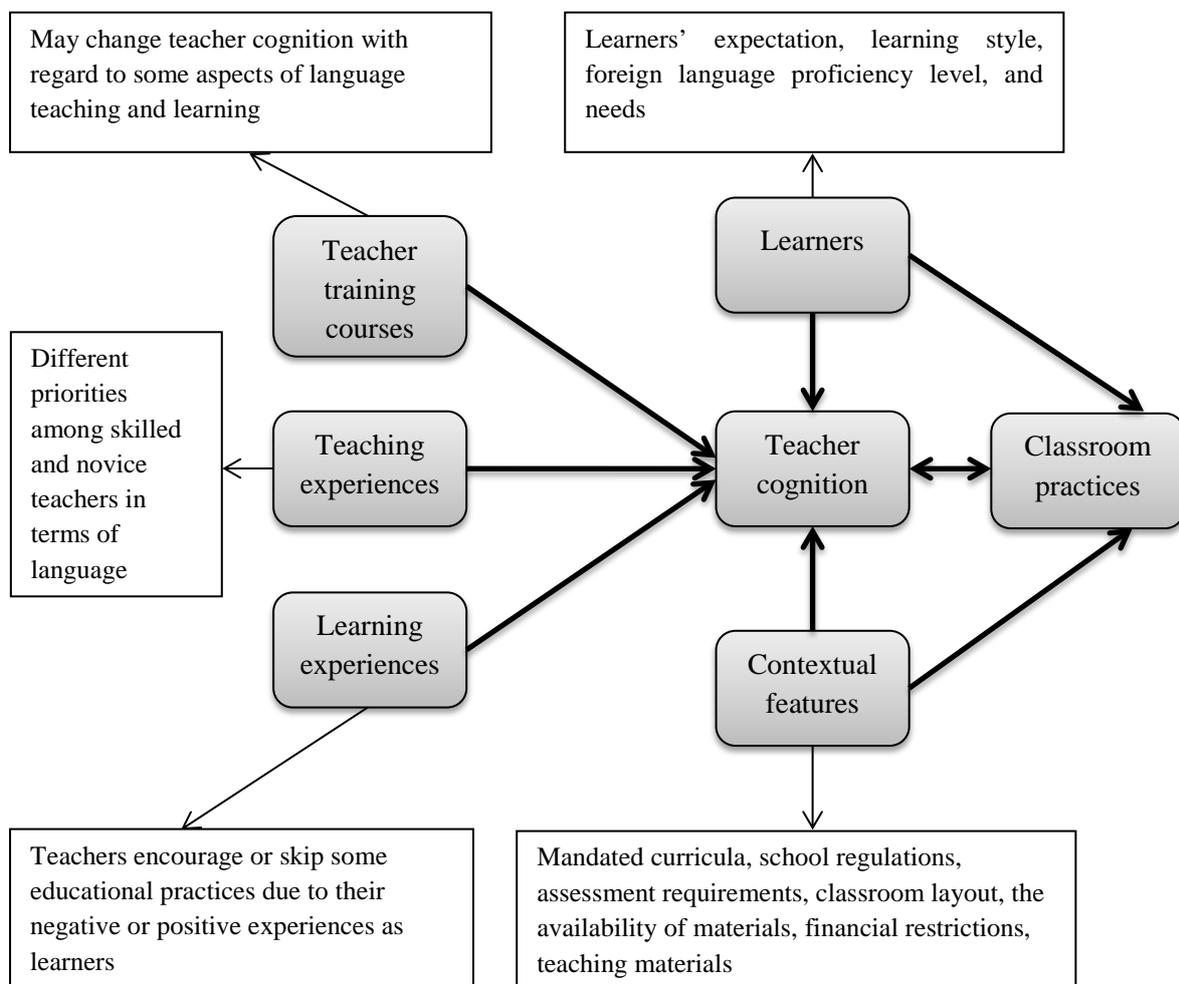


Figure 5: A framework of factors influencing the reciprocal relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practices

The existing literature on potential factors influencing teacher cognition and classroom practices informed the researcher to design the framework illustrated in Fig. 5. It is therefore a development of Borg's (2003) conceptual framework of factors mediating the reciprocal relationship between teachers' cognition and classroom practices by adding the effect of learners as an independent factor and including the effect of teaching materials. This framework was used as the roadmap to enable the researcher to analyse the data and interpret the results.

While previous studies have shed light on a range of factors shaping teachers' cognitions and classroom practices, the extent to which each factor can be influential is not completely clear. Exploring their effects can help teacher educators and curriculum developer to be fully aware of factors that may have exacerbating effect on teaching English. It also enables teachers to become familiar with potential difficulties that may refrain them from putting their cognition into practice. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate to which degree each factor can form classroom practices and teacher cognition with regard to the skill of listening.

2.3.4 Teacher cognition and Communicative Language Teaching

Dissatisfaction with Audiolingualism based on the underlying assumption of behaviourism, focusing on only observable behaviour as the learner is considered a repertoire of behaviours, made CLT very appealing for those who were looking a more humanistic method for teaching English (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Since the initial development of CLT in the 1970s, a variety of general reviews and discussions of the nature of this approach have been written. CLT is best considered as an approach which refers to a various set of principles reflecting communicative views of L2 teaching and learning, which include communication as the means

and the goal of instruction, authentic and meaningful communication, importance of fluency, integration of different language skills, and learning through creative construction as well as trial and error (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Spada, 2007). CLT bases its evaluation of competence on abilities with regard to social interaction, and it is based on principles of L2 acquisition that have been established through research (Savignon, 1991; Spada, 2007). Over the past fifty years, CLT as an approach has evolved, and some scholars believe that it has improved language teaching by placing more emphasis on explicit direct aspects in teaching communicative aptitudes and skills (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, & Thurrell, 1997; Spada, 2007).

Although teachers' approaches to teaching and their roles have undergone significant changes since the introduction of CLT more than forty years ago, studies of practicing teachers have revealed that some erroneous or superficial understandings of the approach may still exist. For example, Thompson (1996) discovered four misconceptions prevalent among teachers concerning the meaning of CLT: that there is no place for direct grammar instruction, that it places emphasis only on speaking, that it emphasizes pair work and game-type activity such as role plays and information gap tasks, and that it expects too much from teachers. For example, lessons may not be predictable as teachers must focus on what learners say as well as how they say it. Teachers also need a vast repertoire of management skills in how to deal with students. Other studies have found that some teachers do not conceptualize CLT based on the standard components of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1981; Littlewood, 2007), or they are not strongly committed to CLT principles (e.g. Fox, 1993; Karavas-Doukas, 1996). Karavas-Doukas (1996) observed 14 secondary English language teachers. She found that teachers followed both traditional and communicative approaches, and that most teachers' classroom practices were teacher-fronted with explicit focus on grammatical forms, and little group work.

Any misinterpretations or rejection of CLT will inevitably influence teachers' cognitions and classroom practices in classrooms that are supposed to be communicative. Studies have therefore been conducted in a range of EFL contexts to ascertain the extent to which classroom practices follow the stated principles of CLT. Using interviews and observation, Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) explored the practical understandings of CLT by ten Japanese teachers of EFL, while Mangubhai et al. (2004) investigated one German teacher's practical theory, and Feryok (2008) examined the consistency between cognition and classroom practices of an EFL teacher in Armenia. Woods and Cakir (2011) examined six novice Turkish teachers' two dimensions of knowledge of CLT dimensions (a personal-impersonal and theoretical-practical dimension), and they found that there is a significant overlap between teachers' understanding of principles of CLT and their classroom practices. Findings revealed that teachers were academically familiar with vital components of CLT, for example, they emphasized interaction, increasing fluency, and improving learners' communicative competence. However, Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) and Woods and Cakir (2011) noted that teachers referred back to their personal ideas and experiences when implementing principles of CLT such as the experience they had achieved overseas and their own learning English experiences at school. Therefore, instead of a straight connection between theoretical or disciplinary knowledge and practice, "impersonal knowledge must be personalized through a process of interpretation stemming from a teacher's own experience" (Woods & Cakir, 2011, p. 389).

Implementing CLT in EFL contexts where students have limited opportunity to use language for real communicative purposes outside the classroom can be problematic. For example, in EFL contexts such as Japan and Iran, teachers were found to follow the grammar translation method due to the values attributed to this method, which they believed were more in accord

with the cultural values of their teaching context (Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999), or due to contextual factors such as students' needs and the washback effects of national university entrance examinations (Butler, 2011; Nishino, 2012; Mowlaie & Rahimi, 2010; Namaghi, 2010; Riazi, 2005). Humphries and Burns (2015) explored teachers' beliefs coupled with superficial understanding of CLT and a lack of ongoing support were key hindrances that prevented teachers from implementing CLT into their practices in Japan. Research in other EFL contexts such as Bangladesh, Armenia, and Colombia (Feryok, 2008; Kim, 2014) has revealed that English teachers articulated a coherent understanding of CLT principles; however, implementation in practice was hampered by limited resources, large class sizes, and expectations of key stakeholders such as learner and institutional expectations about being prepared for university entrance examination. Even different socio-economic contexts (privileged compared to less developed) within a single country can influence the methods of teaching adopted by English language teachers. For example, Hu (2005) found that classroom practices in socioeconomically developed areas in China were significantly influenced by CLT, since teachers used more authentic materials and placed more emphasis on communication skills for social purposes rather than passing English tests. However, in less developed regions teachers adhered to traditional approaches. Clearly, CLT cannot be put into practice without taking into consideration contextual factors that can affect teachers' cognition and their role as decision makers, which plays an essential role in implementing a particular approach. Due to contextual constraints and the complexities of teacher cognition, classroom practices may appear to be inconsistent with stated principles or methodological approaches as set out in the scholarly literature (Breen, 1991; Humphries & Burns, 2015; Thompson, 1996). As listening is essential in communication and emphasized in CLT, teachers' misconceptions about, or lack of confidence, understanding and commitment, may result in a neglect of listening, or in ineffective listening pedagogy.

2.3.5 Teacher cognition with regard to receptive skills

With regard to listening as essential in communication and emphasized in CLT, teachers' misconceptions about, or lack of confidence, understanding and commitment with regard to CLT, may result in a neglect of listening, or in ineffective listening pedagogy. However, a limited number of studies to date have been conducted into teacher cognition exclusively with regard to the skill of listening (Bekleyen, 2009; Graham et al. 2014; Siegel 2013a). Bekleyen (2009) examined the effect of listening anxiety on student teachers' performance, and found that many participants, who felt anxious and lacking in confidence with regard to teaching listening, tended to omit this skill from their lessons. Participants' anxiety appeared to stem from their past foreign language learning experiences, and difficulties they had experienced in distinguishing words in listening input. It showed they were anxious about listening skills and had low self-confidence with regard to their listening abilities. Graham et al. (2011), in a study where the main focus was learners' development of listening proficiency and strategic behaviour, found that teachers considered listening to be a demanding skill from a teaching perspective. The teachers' only response to this challenge was to provide learners with more practice through listening to a spoken text several times until they answered all questions correctly, a method that resembles the comprehension approach. This approach is based on a belief that the main goal in listening is comprehension, which can be achieved through exposure to a quantity of spoken texts (Field, 2008).

The only comprehensive study to date into teacher cognition with regard to the skill of listening was carried out by Graham et al., (2014). A questionnaire was administered to 115 modern foreign language teachers in secondary schools in England. In the first section, composed of open-ended questions, the questionnaire explored the three or four most common listening

classroom practices teachers use to instruct listening. The next section investigated common classroom practices teachers employ in the pre-, during, and post-listening phases. Questionnaire responses revealed apparent inconsistencies between teachers' espoused beliefs about the importance of instructing learners in how to listen efficiently and some of their stated classroom practices, which they clarified in another section of the questionnaire. Moreover, their practices did not align with key issues (e.g. teachability of listening, importance of bottom-up and top-down approaches, the inclusion of metacognitive strategies, use of prediction and pre-listening, as well as focus on global/individual chunks) that have been identified as effective in the literature on listening pedagogy. The selected classroom practices in Graham's et al. (2011) study confirm Goh's (2008) assertion that, in listening lessons, the teacher's first priority appears to be comprehension through task completion "with a focus on the product of listening, [in which] every activity becomes a test of the learners' listening ability" (Goh, 2008, p. 191). This apparent discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices is not limited to teaching listening skills, and has been found in other studies in terms of a range of classroom practices (Breen et al., 2001), and teaching grammar (Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Phipps & Borg, 2009). It can be explained with reference to the range of contextual factors that teachers need to accommodate: the number of students, students' prior learning experience, explicit curriculum purposes and constraints (Woods, 1996).

Graham et al. (2014) investigated the degree to which teachers' beliefs align with the key issues in listening pedagogy as identified in the scholarly literature. The results of this study indicated that the main beliefs underpinning teachers' classroom practices are strongly connected to managing classroom activities, and to syllabus and assessment characteristics such as finding answers, covering materials over the expected time, and getting the learner to do what is anticipated, rather than the recommendations found in the literature on listening. This supports

the claim that, to a large extent, language management issues (e.g. pacing and timing lessons) drive teachers' decisions in listening activities (Nunan, 1992). Studies conducted by Brown (1987) and Flowerdew (1994) showed that listening was taught over an extended period of time through the underpinning assumptions of reading pedagogy. As a whole, there is no doubt in the high value of the studies into listening pedagogy and teacher cognition with regard to the skill. However, the number of studies is significantly limited and the findings of studies into teacher cognition (Graham et al., 2014; Bekleyen, 2009) were based on questionnaire responses rather than observations of classroom practices.

In an investigation of teacher cognition in Lithuania, Kuzborska (2011) explored the relationship between eight teachers' beliefs and their reading classroom practices through observations and video-recorded stimulated recall interviews. The study indicated that teachers believed in reading aloud, emphasizing vocabulary, translation, classroom discussion of different texts, and providing learners with correct answers without considering the process, denoting the underpinning assumptions of a comprehension-based approach in listening pedagogy (Field, 2008). Based on these findings, Kuzborska recommended a meta-cognitive approach to improve reading skills in academic contexts which corresponds to the same approach in teaching listening (e.g. Goh, 2008; Goh & Taib, 2006; Graham & Macaro, 2008; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010). The findings of this study show that there is some overlap between listening and reading in respect of teacher cognitions and classroom practices.

With regard to the value of extensive listening and reading, there is strong evidence that these two activities contribute to successful language learning (Bamford & Day, 2002; Bell, 2001; Chang & Millett, 2013; Yamashita, 2008; Zheng, 2005). However, in studying teachers' cognitions and classroom practices concerning extensive reading and listening in New Zealand

and Japan, Macalister (2010) and Siegel (2014) found that while teachers believed that extensive reading and listening has beneficial effects on reading and listening skill, they did not include extensive reading and listening activities in their classroom practices. Findings showed that both skills benefit from a range of common approaches and format such as comprehension approach, bottom-up and top-down approaches, and pre, while, and post-listening and reading format (Field, 2008; Flowerdew, 1994; Siegel, 2014).

The present study aims to contribute to the existing literature on listening pedagogy and teacher cognition in four ways. It is a classroom-based research study that sheds light on how teachers instruct listening in an authentic EFL context. While two studies (Graham et al., 2014; Seigel, 2013a) investigated listening pedagogy based on a set of pre-determined categories (e.g. comprehension approach, bottom-up activities, and the importance of metacognitive strategies), the present study focused on all aspects of listening pedagogy in order to achieve a more complete picture of listening pedagogy. Findings may therefore provide scholars with invaluable insights into the extent to which research findings can be put into practice in EFL contexts. Research into teacher cognition regarding listening pedagogy also fills a gap in the existing literature on teacher cognition since the number of studies in this area is very limited. In addition, the findings of the present study might inform researchers, teachers, teacher educators, and curriculum developers about how listening pedagogy and teachers' underlying cognitions can be mediated by a range of factors. Finally, with regard to methodology, while Graham et al. (2014) just focused on teachers' stated beliefs and practices, and Siegel (2013a) only employed observations, this study draws on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods (that is, a mixed methods approach was adopted) by using four different sources of data (questionnaire, observation, interview, and documentary data). This was done

to achieve an in-depth nuanced understanding of listening pedagogy, teacher cognition, and potential influencing factors.

2.4 English in secondary and tertiary education in Iran

The following section will provide information about the English curriculum and teaching methodology in Iran, and will also outline some significant constraints of this particular instructional context.

2.4.1 Curriculum and methodology

English and Arabic are the foreign languages taught in public schools in Iran. Between Grades 7 and 12 (ages 13 to 18), students receive four hours of instruction per week to complete a compulsory two-credit English course each year, making 12 credits in total over six years. At the tertiary level, a three-credit compulsory course in General English must be taken by all students, irrespective of their field of study. The duration of this compulsory course is 51 hours in each semester, comprising 17 three-hour sessions. Students majoring in mathematics, science, or the humanities are required to pass a four credit course in English for Academic Purposes (EAP). In the case of mathematics and science, the EAP courses are usually taught by subject specialists, while EAP teachers instruct students from the Humanities. EAP courses involve 68 hours of instruction. The first priority of these two courses (General English and EAP) is to enable students to read and translate academic materials written in English (Farhady, Hezaveh, & Hedayati, 2010). The Ministry of Science, Research and Technology controls the publication of discipline-based EAP materials, which all follow a standard format: pre-reading information, topic-based reading texts, comprehension exercises, and vocabulary lists and exercises.

Grammar translation is the dominant instructional approach for EFL in public schools in Iran, and textbooks taught at public schools and universities are based on this method (Riazi, 2005; Jahangard, 2007; Namaghi, 2010). This approach, alongside perceived weaknesses of the approach, will therefore have an influence on teacher cognition in the context. However, the impact of grammar translation on students' communicative competence has become a major concern among Iranian EFL scholars in recent years. Atai and Mazlum (2013) reported a study into English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum planning by the Ministry of Education and its implementation by teachers in 13 provinces in Iran. Interviews with administrators in charge of planning in the Ministry of Education and head teachers in public schools revealed that the lack of an ELT syllabus document was significant, and that materials developers appeared to adhere strictly to the priorities as stated by the High Council of Cultural Revolution and the Ministry of Education, which are to focus on improving students' reading skills for the purpose of studying scientific texts. Most head teachers believed that textbooks were unable to meet students' cognitive and affective language learning needs. A questionnaire administered to 672 teachers showed that the majority of teachers considered the prescribed teaching methods and testing practices to be ineffective, and more than half ignored many of them in their own teaching practice. From this study, it seems that curriculum and textbooks mandated by the government are at least partly responsible for the inability of public schools to meet students' communicative needs with regard to English (Riazi, 2005; Davari & Aghagozlou, 2015).

Other scholars have compared textbooks used in public and private English schools as to whether they meet communicative needs. Three English books in high schools and one at pre-university level were evaluated (Razmjoo, 2007; Riazi & Mosalanejad, 2010; Yarmohammadi, 2002). Findings indicated that public school textbooks do not provide students with

communicative aspects of English language, focusing rather on grammar and vocabulary, while private English institutes textbooks represented core CLT principles to a greater extent.

Washback effect as the influence of assessment on teaching procedures and learning is another factor which can exert a significant effect on teaching and classroom activities (Bailey, 1996; Shohamy, Donitsa-Schmidt, & Ferman, 1996). With regard to Iran, Mokhtari and Moradi (2013) and Salehi and Yunus (2012) examined the washback effect of the national School-Leaving Test of English and the universities' entrance examinations that take place at the end of the secondary school years in Iran. Drawing on observations and semi-structured interviews, both studies revealed that the examination had negative effects on teachers by pressuring them into neglecting communicative activities and into using the grammar-translation method (emphasizing reading translation and vocabulary and grammar instruction) to meet the requirements of the examinations. These two high-stakes assessments for entrance to tertiary study in Iran have led to minimal emphasis on oral skills, especially listening, in the secondary school curriculum, which in turn has had a detrimental effect on learners' proficiency at tertiary level. Rahimirad and Moini (2015) conducted an experimental study to investigate the challenges faced by Iranian university graduate students in listening to academic lectures, and also how understanding of metacognitive strategies can improve their skills. Findings revealed that EAP learners considered listening to be extremely demanding, with difficulties in maintaining concentration and integrating listening and other activities (e.g. taking notes) mentioned as particular sources of difficulties for participants. However, training in metacognitive strategies such as monitoring, evaluation, planning and directed attention, and monitoring and problem solving helped the experimental group in this research to outperform the control group considerably.

2.4.2 Contextual constraints

As the previous section has shown, a number of constraints influence EAP courses in Iran. Researchers in this area (Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008; Eslami, 2010) have asserted that there are inadequacies with regard to teacher education courses, syllabus documents, analyses of students' needs, and evaluations of students' language proficiency. Policy plays an essential role in teaching English in Iran, and political influences also constrain the design of English language teaching curricula (Hayati & Mashhadi, 2010). English language materials and curricula in secondary school and EAP courses at tertiary level are created and moderated by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology. After the Islamic revolution in 1979, the need to disseminate revolutionary ideologies in academic contexts was considered by many educationalists to be as important as the dissemination of knowledge, and material developers were influenced by political and ideological directions in the way they designed materials (Atai & Mazlum, 2013; Haddad & Yamini, 2011). The impact of these policies and ideologies is noticeable in one study of teachers' beliefs about the English language teaching policy of the government (Atai & Mazlum, 2013). Two materials developers, the Deputy of the Ministry of Education, and 22 head teachers in public schools, were interviewed and a questionnaire was administered to 672 teachers in 13 provinces. Findings revealed that a substantial number of teachers (70%) believed that, political and religious reasons, the Ministry had prescribed ineffective methods to develop communicative abilities in English.

To elicit their beliefs about possible restrictions affecting the teaching of English at state universities and some branches of Islamic Azad University (a private university system), Mellati, Fatemi, and Motallebzadeh (2013) interviewed nine instructors and administered a large-scale questionnaire to 369 ELT instructors. Results of their study indicated that teachers

faced a number of context-based constraints including lack of enough time and materials, economic issues, uninterested learners, mandated curriculum, and didactic policies. Furthermore, they regarded the unrealistic expectations of many parents as another negative factor that can interfere with English language teaching and learning. Cultural constraints such as religious beliefs, cultural distance, and taboo words exist in addition to those found in the instructional context, all of which can impede learners' progress (Mirdehghan, HoseiniKargar, Navab, and Mahmoodi, 2011). Teachers in this study believed that integrating both Iranian and English culture can help the process of teaching, and instructional materials should not challenge or ignore the religious factors of the community. Hostile political relations towards the West, and in particular the USA, may also have had a negative influence on students' desire to learn English.

2.4.3 English language teachers and learners in Iran

The shortage of knowledgeable teachers of English with good spoken proficiency in the language, especially in public schools, has no doubt influenced the quality of teaching offered to students of English in Iran. Teacher training centres managed by the Ministry of Education and universities are responsible for teacher education in general, and English language teachers in particular. Those students who study in teacher training centres are employed by the Ministry of Education. They are paid while they study throughout their four-year period of training and start teaching in public schools immediately after graduation. Teachers who graduate from these centres tend to have a lower level of proficiency than other English graduates because they are guaranteed employment, and therefore they are less motivated to improve their proficiency. In addition, in most courses in teacher training centres, theoretical rather than practical knowledge dominates (Nezakat-Alhossaini & Ketabi, 2012). On the other hand, English graduates from other centres (public and private universities) are required to have a

good professional knowledge in terms of core principles of TEFL as well as achieving very good general proficiency in English to successfully find employment in one of the private EFL institutes. These institutes also hold in-house education courses in CLT for novice teachers to help them to meet the standard of knowledge and proficiency that is required.

In addition to difficulties in providing appropriate education for novice teachers, other constraints also affect the quality of teaching in tertiary English courses. After observing tertiary EAP classes in Iran, Hayati (2008) concluded that there was a shortage of teachers who are expert in English language teaching in general and knowledgeable in relevant disciplinary content areas, as well as insufficient time to cover materials, and ineffective textbooks that did not include communicative aspects of English language learning and use. However, these critiques and constraints are not exclusive to the Iranian context, and scholars in English-speaking countries (e.g., Basturkmen, 2014; Crookes & Arakaki, 1999) have identified similar concerns regarding teacher expertise, materials, and the persistent constraint of time with regard to the teaching of L2 English.

A number of studies provide us with direct evidence of the beliefs of teachers in Iran on aspects of EAP, including the degree of emphasis or neglect of particular macro-skills. Shishavan and Sadeghi (2009) explored the views of English teachers at universities and private English language schools. They found that teachers considered that a teacher who emphasized communicative aspects of teaching, assigned homework, followed precise lesson plans, was up to date, and had good knowledge of pedagogy and proficiency in general English could be described as an ideal or highly effective teacher. English teachers' beliefs about their abilities in teaching, or their sense of self-efficacy, and their level of proficiency, have also been examined. Eslami and Fatahi, (2008) administered a questionnaire to 40 English teachers in

different public schools in Tehran to investigate teachers' conceptualizations of their self-efficacy with regard to listening instruction. The results indicated that teachers considered themselves more efficient in teaching strategies than in managing the class and involving students in interactive activities. They also considered themselves more proficient in teaching reading and speaking, less effective in instructing students in the skill of writing (e.g. writing business letters), and least proficient in teaching listening (e.g. watching English news). Finally, the higher the level of teachers' proficiency, the higher was their self-efficacy, leading to a stronger inclination to use CLT in their teaching practice.

Another issue is the effect of the socio-economic context in Iran and teachers' personal views on the motivation of students to learn English. The widespread use of English as an international language and as a lingua franca for communication in situations where people do not share the same L1 has boosted motivation. In the context of Iran, learning English is prestigious, and people tend to have positive attitudes towards it (Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009; Sadeghi & Richards, 2015). Mastering this language can promote Iranians' social status and lead to a better job (Chalak & Kassaian, 2010). Many students are therefore instrumentally motivated to learn to communicate orally in English as well as to read academic texts in order to improve their career prospects, gain higher social status, and enhance their chances of living overseas. Integrative sources of motivation include spoken as well as written interaction with the international academic, business and/or social community, and engagement with internet-based and other technologies (Ardavani & Durrant, 2015; Sayadian & Lashkarian, 2010; Vaezi, 2008).

In spite of a number of studies at public universities and schools, a lack of equivalent research in private English institutes is apparent. Teaching approaches and teachers' beliefs in these

institutes have not been adequately investigated (Shishavan & Sadeghi, 2009). While a number of scholars have found that textbooks used in private English institutes followed core CLT principles to a great extent (Razmjoo, 2007; Riazi & Mosalanejad, 2010), how teachers instruct English in these institutes has not yet been explored. The present study aims to shed light on how teachers instruct listening with a view to providing information for curriculum and material developers as well as teacher trainers about teachers' knowledge and cognitions with regard to the skill of listening. The findings of the study might also inform the Principals of these institutes about factors that might impede learners in developing their language knowledge and teachers in developing their teaching approaches.

2.4.4 Summary

Over the past fifty years, research into teacher cognition has undergone a number of changes, and has shifted from a narrow focus on teachers' observable behaviours to one that includes teachers' mental lives (cognition) and decision-making procedures in various contexts. In addition, teachers' mental lives have been hypothesized in several ways which has resulted in a wealth of terms and constructs that, although they have shed light on different aspects of the nature of teacher cognition, have the potential to create confusion. This chapter has explained that teacher cognition as an umbrella term has been adopted in the present study to embrace different aspects of teachers' mental lives incorporating beliefs, attitudes, values, and (personal practical, professional, pedagogical) knowledge.

The present study investigates the relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practices with reference to teaching the skill of listening, and several relevant themes have emerged from this review of the literature. First, there is clearly a reciprocal relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practices and vice versa. Second, empirical studies

into teacher cognition and classroom practices suggest that there is not necessarily any relationship or direct correspondence between them. This means that change in teacher cognition does not inevitably lead to change in classroom practices, and vice versa. Third, there may be some discrepancies between teacher cognition and classroom practices as a result of mediating internal and external factors. Fourth, teacher cognition can be shaped by some factors including prior learning experience, teaching experience, contextual factors, and professional training. Fifth, quantitative studies relying on only large scale surveys cannot illuminate different aspects of a complex construct like teacher cognition, and investigations that include instruments such as observations and interviews will gather direct evidence of practices and cognition. Finally, comparisons of teacher cognition and classroom practices for teaching the skill of listening and reading have revealed similarities with regard to extensive listening and reading. Research has also revealed discrepancies between teachers' cognition and their classroom practices in teaching listening.

This chapter has also provided information about a number of constraints relevant to teaching English in the context of Iran. First, English is the predominant foreign language taught at public and private schools and universities. Second, teaching English is characterised by the grammar translation method in public schools and CLT in private schools. Third, contextual constraints such as the relatively poor quality of teacher education courses, absence of proper course design, ignorance of students' needs, and ad hoc and inappropriate evaluation have exacerbating effects on EAP teaching in Iran. Finally, there is strong evidence that both teachers and learners are dissatisfied with EAP courses at public schools and universities and for this reason, many learners prefer to attend private EFL institutes and schools to improve their English proficiency, especially in the skills of listening and oral interaction. Due to constraints which determine the skills focus and pedagogic interests of English language

instruction in the public sector of tertiary education in Iran, the study reported in this thesis was conducted in private EFL institutes, where curricula and course books are mainly based on CLT, and where the skill of listening is regularly included in the curriculum. Although materials and course books in private EFL schools are based on CLT, the effects of contextual constraints will, of course, influence beliefs, and also the extent to which teachers can put into practice particular beliefs or principles about listening instruction.

2.4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the development of listening pedagogy over the last fifty years, introduced the main methods of teaching the skill of listening to date, and clarified some key issues such as the effect of authentic materials and listening assessment. It has discussed different components of the multi-faceted and complex construct of teacher cognition, and described the effects of internal and external factors on teacher cognition. It has explained that, in Iran, many students who are required to learn English at public schools are dissatisfied with the current methods of instruction, and therefore attend private EFL institutes to improve their communicative language skills. It has also clarified contextual constraints such as the shortage of knowledgeable teachers in English, mandated curricula, and language policy in the context of Iran.

2.5 Rationale and research questions

This chapter has also shown that the skill of listening has been inadequately addressed in existing literature on the importance of teacher cognition with regard to different skills. This issue underpins the first aim of the present study to explore how teachers instruct with regard to the skill of listening. Listening is an invaluable source for comprehensible input, and an important skill which facilitates L2 learning and development of other skills (Oxford, 1993;

Richards, 2005). However, to date most of the research on listening pedagogy has been based on anecdotal evidence, instinctive explanations, and individual perceptions rather than empirical evidence (Siegel, 2013a). Studying L2 listening pedagogy by investigating listening classroom practices can inform researchers about the ways in which listening is taught, and give insight into underlying cognitions. It also supplies invaluable information about the extent to which teachers employ common approaches to listening pedagogy, and the extent to which teachers' classroom practices mirror the existing literature on listening pedagogy.

The second aim of this study is to explore the cognitions underpinning teachers' classroom practices with regard to the skill of listening. Identifying aspects of teacher cognition will provide insights to expand our comprehension and explanation of teachers' classroom practices, and will complement descriptions based on observation of classroom practices (Breen et al., 2001). It will also provide a source of experientially obtained knowledge for teacher trainers, since experienced teachers' espoused cognitions form a meaningful basis for discussion and reflection on the planned aspects of classroom practices (Basturkmen, 2012; Freeman & Richards, 1996; Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Any change in classroom practice or any implementation of new curriculum content needs to be carried out in light of teachers' cognitions about language teaching and learning in a particular context. Understanding these cognitions can make it possible to adopt a new curriculum or language policy (Breen et al., 2001). Knowledge about the cognition of teachers that emerges from a range of studies in different contexts can be an alternative to prescriptions for effective teaching methodologies derived from scholarship that may not be based on adequate consideration of actual contexts of teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 1994; Pennycook, 2017). Finally, the study sheds light on the types of contextual resources and constraints and the degree to which they influence teachers' listening classroom practices and their cognitions.

The research questions that will guide this study, with regard to the teaching of EFL listening by experienced teachers working in Iranian private English schools, are as follow:

1. What classroom practices characterise EFL teachers' teaching?
2. What cognitions underpin their classroom practices?
3. What factors shape teachers' cognitions and classroom practices?

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter presents information about the research methodology underpinning the present study. It presents the pragmatic research paradigm guiding the researcher in his choice of methods, and outlines key debates regarding the philosophical underpinnings and assumptions of the mixed methods research design utilised in the study. Descriptions of the context of the study and explanation of the selection of participants are then provided. This chapter presents the research methods, data collection and data analysis procedures employed in the study. Criteria used to evaluate the validity of the research are also explained.

3.1 Research design

The purpose of the following section is to provide explanations for adopting the pragmatic paradigm to explore listening pedagogy and teacher cognition in the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL). It accounts for the selection of a mixed methods approach.

3.1.1 Selection of the pragmatic paradigm

Paradigm assumptions can guide researchers in their choice of research method, and need to be in harmony with the central focus of the research (Cohen et al., 2011; Patton, 2002; Scotland, 2012). Positivism represents the underpinning assumption of quantitative research (Punch, 2009). The positivist perspective assumes that a single reality exists that follows universal laws, and can be examined as such. According to positivism, not only is an objective reality knowable and predictable (Riazi, 2016), but also “the function of science is to develop explanations in the form of universal laws ... to develop nomothetic knowledge” (Punch, 2009, p. 18). In the interpretivist paradigm, by contrast, the primary aim is to understand and interpret subjective,

human experience. This paradigm does not assume an absolute ‘truth’ that is discoverable or knowable. It draws heavily on qualitative data, and uses an emic approach (Cohen et al., 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Since the main purpose of the present study was to contribute to research-based knowledge on listening in an EFL environment, and to elicit the beliefs and knowledge that inform teachers’ classroom practices, the study was situated within the pragmatic paradigm. This paradigm informs mixed methods research. It provides a framework for those who are concerned with practical problem solving as their research area (Creswell, 2009; Riazi, 2017). Mixed methods can be considered as a methodology or a method (Riazi, 2017). In terms of the former, ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives must be taken into account (Riazi, 2016; Teddlie & Tashkori, 2009). Concerning the latter, the theoretical aspects such as the relationship between the researcher and the researched are considered unrelated (Riazi, 2017). The pragmatic paradigm is suitable to answer research questions without being concerned about paradigmatic discussions (Creswell, 2009; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). As a result, as Riazi (2017) argued, “researchers have been motivated to avoid ‘either-or’ methodological debates and justify mixing methods more practically by shifting their main focus from theoretical discussions to practical research questions they could answer using both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis procedures” (p. 34). In this study, mixed methods research was considered suitable because the main concern was not about the theoretical perspectives.

Mixed methods researchers combine quantitative and qualitative methods for five purposes: triangulation, complementarity, initiation, expansion, and development. The predominant goal of adopting mixed methods research in the current study was to use both quantitative and qualitative approaches to triangulate data in order to enable the researcher to achieve a nuanced,

in-depth understanding of listening pedagogy and teacher cognition in order to answer the research questions. It is also compatible with the substantive and methodological dimensions of the theoretical framework provided in Chapter One since mixed methods research can explain and describe the complex nature of listening pedagogy and teacher cognition by drawing on both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

3.1.2 Selection of mixed methods

Researchers describe studies that combine qualitative and quantitative methods using a range of terms that include interrelating qualitative and quantitative data, mixed model studies, and triangulated, blended, multi-methodological, and mixed methods research (Sandelowski, 2003; Thomas, 2003). In this study, I use the term mixed methods (Creswell, 2012; Dörnyei, 2007) to describe research that is based on a pragmatic belief that quantitative and qualitative methods when used alone have their limitations, and that blends of the two approaches can be complementary (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2011) as well as more effective for exploring complex areas of research (Creswell, 2009; Johnson et al., 2007; Sandelowski, 2003).

I adopted mixed methods as my research strategy for this project for three main reasons. First, mixed methods research has particular value for investigating complex issues in educational and social contexts in order to achieve in-depth understandings (Dörnyei, 2007; Mertens, 2014; Sandelowski, 2003). As discussed in the previous chapter, teacher cognition is a multi-faceted and complex construct (Borg, 2003; Woods, 1996) that calls for qualitative and quantitative methods to elicit and understand its many facets. Mixed methods research is an effective research design for drawing on the strengths of qualitative and quantitative data, and it provides an opportunity to validate one set of findings against the other (Creswell, 2012; Sandelowski,

2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2011). Results and conclusions based on mixed methods research tend to be more robust, and provide a stronger basis for establishing the external validity of the study (Dörnyei, 2007).

There is no consensus regarding the stage at which quantitative and qualitative research need to be integrated. While some scholars argue that mixed methods research can occur at all stages of the study (Greene, 2006; Patton, 2002; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2011; Yin, 2006), others believe that they can only be combined at the data collection and data analysis stages (Bazeley, 2006; Dörnyei, 2007). In this research, quantitative (most questionnaire responses) and qualitative (some questionnaire responses, observations, interviews, and curriculum documents) methods were used at the data collection and analysis stages. I collected quantitative data from questionnaire responses and qualitative data from observations, stimulated-recall interviews, and curriculum documents. The data were designed to provide complementary perspectives. The rationale for this choice was that while quantitative results provide a general picture of the research, qualitative data can help to elaborate and refine the general picture of the quantitative results. The approach also assisted triangulation, enabling the study to address one of the main goals of mixed methods research - to cross-validate or corroborate findings achieved through comparison of the quantitative and qualitative data (Riazi, 2017).

3.2 Context and participants

3.2.1 The study context

The study was conducted in Gilan, one of 31 provinces of Iran and located in the north of the country. It lies along the Caspian Sea, and has borders with Russia across the Caspian Sea and the Republic of Azerbaijan. In comparison with other provinces, it is small (area: 14,042 km²),

but quite densely populated (approximately 2.60 million in 2016). Gilan has 16 cities, the most important of which are Rasht (the centre of province), Bandar-e Anzali (the main harbour port), and Lahijan.

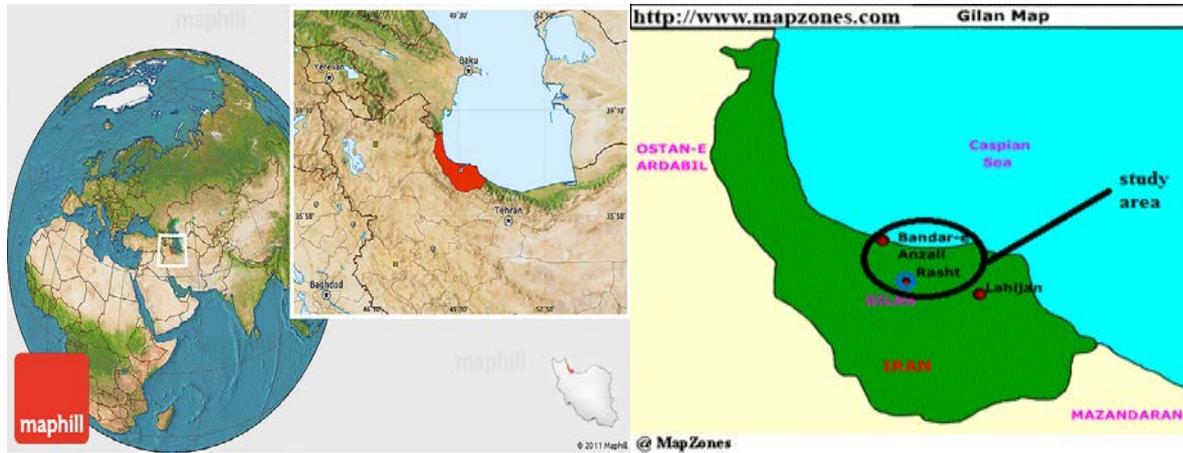


Figure 6: The study context

There are a large number of private English language institutes in the province, and most are located in self-contained, high-rise buildings in the city centres. Some institutes are equipped with the Internet, large screen TVs, computers (only for teachers), and language laboratories; however, others are less well equipped and provide only CD players. Courses are offered at all levels from beginner to advanced to prepare learners for school examinations, tertiary courses, and international examinations including IELTS and TOEFL. Most students who attend the institutes are at primary and high-school levels, and they attend these classes to improve their English to pass final examinations in public schools, or to further their education abroad. Course fees are relatively inexpensive (around \$US 50 per semester), and most families in the province can afford to send their sons and daughters there for extra tuition. Learners in these institutes are usually motivated and study hard to pass their final examinations, since a pass in the end of course oral and written examinations is a requirement for advancing to the next level.

3.2.2 Courses and institutions

The specific research questions guiding this study called for participants who were teachers in private institutes. All seven institutes in this study were organised in a similar way and used a similar curriculum and pedagogy. In private institutes, instruction is typically organised into four to five semesters per year. Each semester comprises 20 sessions and each session lasts 90 minutes. Since the majority of learners are secondary school students at public schools who attend these private English institutes concurrently with their public schools, education classes are held in the evenings. They generally comprise a range of students at different ages, and language proficiency levels from elementary to advanced. The number of learners per class is usually between seven and 18, and very few classes exceed 20 students. Classes take place two or three times a week. The predominant approach is communicative, and teaching materials are global ELT course books based on this orientation. Examples include *American English File* (Oxenden & Latham-Koenig, 2010) and *Interchange* (Richards, 2005). English language is the medium of instruction, and teachers avoid using students' L1 (Persian) as much as possible.

3.2.3 Recruitment of participants

A nested sampling procedure was employed in this study. In mixed methods research, there are two types of sampling procedure, probability sampling which is associated with the quantitative strand, and non-probability sampling related to the qualitative strand (Riazi, 2016). Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007) introduced two criteria to guide the choice of sampling procedures in mixed methods research: the relationship between quantitative and qualitative samples, and the time order between these two strands. If both strands happen simultaneously, data collection will be concurrent and if one strand follows another one, it will be sequential. Since this study used a concurrent design, collecting quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, four sampling types are appropriate: identical, parallel, nested, and multilevel

sampling (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007; Riazi, 2017). The nested sampling procedure was followed by using a subset of the participants from the quantitative sample to provide further (qualitative) data (Collins, 2013; Riazi, 2017). Nested sampling thus helps with triangulation of data (Riazi, 2017).

I aimed to recruit a sample that was broadly representative of the population of qualified and experienced teachers in private English institutes in Iran to ensure that the results obtained had the broadest applicability possible. All participants who met the criteria listed below were accepted as participants in the questionnaire phase of the study, and the first eight volunteers from the questionnaire group were selected to participate in the observation and interview stages of the study. Since the Principals of these private English institutes stated that experienced teachers with high qualifications (e.g. BA or MA in TESOL) were preferred when it came to the recruitment of staff, participants who met the following criteria were considered appropriate for this study. These criteria were:

- teachers in private English institutes
- a Bachelor's or Master's degree in applied linguistics/TESOL
- at least 3 years of experience in TESOL
- willingness to participate in the study

Since there are always limitations in qualitative research to how many participants can be recruited or the number of sites that can be visited by the researcher, principled decisions on how to recruit our participants are essential. Due to the restricted availability of public transport, evening traffic jams, the distances between institutes, closures for public holidays and staggered semester breaks in private English institutes (from one to three weeks), at the beginning of the study I established how many participants could feasibly be recruited and how

many sites and cities I could access. I selected the cities of Rasht and Bandar-e Anzali because I am familiar with the private English institutes in these two cities, and also with the education system of the province.

In order to recruit a representative sample of English teachers in private English institutes in Iran, after ethical permission from the University of Auckland was granted (see Appendix A), I contacted the Principals of ten institutes with branches in different cities in Gilan province to ask for permission to conduct my research in their institutes. Seven Principals agreed to allow me to recruit participants by arranging for an administrator to send out an advertisement about the study. Teachers who met these criteria and responded to the invitation in the email advertisement were then contacted and given Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms (see Appendices B and C). Participants were assured that they could withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason, that their participation would be voluntary, that information from the study would remain confidential to the researcher and his supervisors, and that responses would be reported in a way that assured anonymity. Those who agreed to take part in the project then completed and signed Consent Forms. Questionnaires were sent out by email to all participants, and seventy-two EFL teachers from two cities in Gilan province returned completed questionnaires.

Participants for the observation and interview stages of the study were a sub-sample from the larger group. A statement at the end of the questionnaire invited respondents to volunteer for classroom observations and interviews, and stated that the first eight teachers to reply who met these criteria would be accepted as participants in this stage of the project. Teachers were also informed that if they volunteered to participate in observations and interviews, they would be given a voucher to the value of \$NZ 40. In this way, eight teachers from four institutes were

recruited from the questionnaire sample group of 72 teachers to take part in classroom observations and interviews.

3.2.4 Participant profiles

Table 1 presents demographic information about the eight teachers who volunteered for classroom observations and interviews. All names are pseudonyms. The eight participants were educated in Iran and were L1 speakers of Farsi. Six teachers were female and the other two were male. Their ages ranged from 26 to 34. The gender imbalance can be explained by the fact that most teachers in private English institutes are women. Four of the teachers held a BA in English Translation, two had an MA in English Literature and Linguistics, and the remaining two teachers also had an MA in TESOL. Their teaching experience ranged from three to thirteen years. None had ever lived or travelled to an English-speaking country. They were all teaching General English to students at different levels from elementary to advanced at the time of data collection (September 2016-January 2017).

Table 1: Professional profiles of participants

Pseudonym	Age and gender	Qualification	Experience	Level
Elahe	Female, 33	MA in TESOL	13 years	Elementary & Intermediate
Majid	Male, 28	BA in English Translation	3 years	Pre-intermediate
Neda	Female, 29	BA in English Translation	10 years	Upper-intermediate
Rana	Female, 28	BA in English Translation	8 years	Upper-intermediate
Sanaz	Female, 32	MA in Linguistics	8 years	Intermediate
Shilan	Female, 34	MA in TESOL	11 years	Pre-intermediate
Sina	Male, 27	MA in English Literature	3 years	Intermediate
Vida	Female, 26	BA in English Translation	5 years	Pre-intermediate

As stated, the eight experienced English teachers who gave permission for me to observe and record their lessons were a sub-sample from the larger group of questionnaire respondents. They were from four different private English institutes. Three teachers (Neda, Rana, and Vida) used the course book *American English File* (Oxenden & Latham-Koenig, 2010). Neda and Rana had ten students in their classes at upper-intermediate level, and there were six intermediate-level students in Vida's class (these levels of proficiency are taken from the levels of the course book that were used in the two classes). The institute provided CD players in their classrooms; however, they had no access to DVD resources. Two other teachers (Elahe and Sanaz) used the text *Interchange* (Richards, 2005) at the elementary and intermediate levels respectively. Their classrooms were equipped with the Internet, large screen televisions, and computers (for teacher use). All the students in these two classes were high school students, except for three university students. A further participating teacher was Majid who taught nine pre-intermediate high school students. He had access to a teacher-only computer and a language laboratory. The text book he used was *English Results* (Hancock & McDonald, 2008). The remaining participant teachers were Shilan and Sina. There were 12 and 15 pre-intermediate and intermediate learners in their classes respectively, and they used the course book *American English File 2 and 3*. They also had access to a teacher-only computer and a language laboratory.

All participating teachers had had experience teaching a range of students of different ages and proficiency levels from elementary to advanced. Their classes took place twice a week for 90 minutes, and were held in the evenings. Each semester consisted of 20 sessions. The majority of learners were high school students; however, some were university students or already in employment.

With regard to listening materials, the main source of input was the text book, and it offered a range of monologic and dialogic texts, mostly recorded by L1 speakers of American English. All teachers devoted approximately 20 percent of the observed lessons to listening instruction. Seven teachers used supplementary authentic materials such as songs, movies, and cartoons (again with American accents) for extensive listening practice; however, no texts by local (Iranian) speakers were used in any of the observed lessons. The general instructional approach used by teachers was communicative, and therefore assessment used direct testing through communicative activities such as listening for specific information, identifying details and gist, and interpreting speakers' attitudes (see Appendix I). The skill of listening was assessed at the end of the semester and formed ten to 15 percent of all questions in multi-skill tests. End of course assessments of listening included different question types such as multiple choice, gap-filling, and open questions. Teachers also evaluated learners' listening skill through a participation mark that evaluated the extent to which they could complete listening activities in course lessons.

3.2.5 Summary

This section has outlined the context of the study by providing information about the characteristics of the courses and institutions. It has described the justification for selection of participants based on purposeful sampling procedures. A summary of teachers' personal information has been presented. The choice of research methods is explained in the following section.

3.3 Development and piloting of research instruments

Four data collection instruments were utilised in this research: questionnaires, observations, stimulated-recall interviews, and curriculum documents.

3.3.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires can be defined as “any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers” (Brown, 2001, p.6). They can perform a variety of functions including obtaining demographic and behavioural information and eliciting information about cognitive processes (Creswell, 2012; Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). The questionnaire originally designed for use in this study provided both quantitative and qualitative data. It comprised 71 closed questions that required participants to answer items on a five or six point Likert scale, and four open-ended questions that asked for information about how participants instructed with regard to the skill of listening, as well as their cognitions about classroom practices. The questionnaire was presented in English and completed by participants in English.

Questionnaire content drew on the existing body of literature on listening pedagogy as well as the researcher’s experience as an English teacher in Iran. It had three main goals. First, it explored listening pedagogy by collecting data about common classroom practices that teachers use to teach this skill. Second, it elicited teachers’ beliefs and principles about different methods in listening pedagogy and the cognitions that underpin their classroom practices. Finally, it investigated how teachers’ perspectives are influenced by factors such as teaching and socio-cultural contexts, learners (e.g. needs and learning style), and their experience as English learners and teachers.

Content validity refers to “the extent to which the items on a measure assess the same content or how well the content material was sampled in the measure” (Rubio et al., 2003, p. 94). To

establish the content validity of the questionnaire, the following measures were taken. My two supervisors and five fellow doctoral candidates at the University of Auckland were asked to comment on the clarity, validity, and suitability of the questionnaire. Modifications based on their feedback included alterations to the order of questions (e.g. placing open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire), alterations to the wording of some items (e.g. changing the statement “watch cartoons, movies, news and advertisements” to “watch types of entertainments (e.g. cartoons, movies, series, and advertisements)”), addition of some items to Part A and C (e.g. “Listening can be helpful to practice grammatical rules”), and exclusion of some items in Part B (e.g. Listen in pairs). Part F was added to give participants an opportunity to comment in their own words on the teaching of listening in private English institutes in Iran.

Since the success of a questionnaire depends on its wordings of items, it was essential for it to be piloted on a sample of teachers who were similar to the end-users of the questionnaire (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). The revised questionnaire was therefore administered to 30 experienced teachers in private English institutes in Iran in different cities from the two where the study would take place. In addition to filling out the questionnaire, participants were asked to evaluate its clarity, thoroughness, and user-friendliness by providing comments at the end of each section. Based on their feedback, further modifications were made. After participants reported difficulties in following some instructions, their wording was simplified. Questionnaire items that referred to practices rarely used in the teaching of listening in Iran (e.g. asking students to keep a log of how they feel about listening) were removed.

The final version of the questionnaire comprised six parts (see Appendix D). They are as follows:

- Part A: ranking different skills and subskills in terms of teaching difficulty and emphasis
- Part B: examining common classroom practices that teachers utilize
- Part C: investigating teachers cognitions underpinning the skill
- Part D: ranking factors influencing teachers' cognitions and classroom practices
- Part E: exploring the three or four most common classroom practices and teachers' cognitions underpinning these practices
- Part F: exploring teachers' further comments on listening pedagogy

Since the main purpose of the study was to examine how teachers instruct with regard to listening, and also the beliefs and principles underpinning their classroom practices, and factors shaping their cognitions and practices, I first needed to find out if participants followed a conventional format for teaching listening. To this end, I listed some practices based on conventional pre-, while, and post-listening phases, together with classroom practices that drew on different approaches such as 'before listening, I teach new vocabulary that is essential for understanding' (see questionnaire items in Part B). This helped to answer my first question concerning how listening is taught in private English institutes in Iran. The questionnaire also examined teachers' cognitions by eliciting their beliefs about common approaches in listening pedagogy (e.g. the comprehension approach, bottom-up and top-down approaches), and key issues arising from the existing literature on listening such as the teachability of effective listening and metacognitive strategy instruction, the value of extensive and intensive listening, and the usefulness of authentic materials. Since the last two research questions informing this research were about factors influencing teacher cognition and classroom practices, teachers were asked to rank five factors along a scale to examine the extent to which particular factors influence their teaching practices.

3.3.2 Observations

Observation can be defined as “the process of gathering open-ended, first-hand information by observing people and places at a research site” (Creswell, 2012, p. 213). Observation is a key source of data, and an important instrument in qualitative inquiry (Dörnyei, 2007). While questionnaires are a valuable source of information about teachers’ personal perspectives on their classroom practices (Borg & Burns, 2008), observations in naturally occurring contexts provide direct information about the topic under investigation (Dörnyei, 2007). However, it needs to be acknowledged that direct observations of classroom practices for research purposes are interpreted by subjective sources: in this study, by teachers (through stimulated-recall) and also by the researcher in his recollection and analysis of observational data.

I adopted non-participant observations in order to be sensitive to the dynamics and effects of the context of teaching without interfering with the authenticity of the teaching context any more than was absolutely necessary (Borg, 2015; Cohen et al., 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The purpose of classroom observations in this research was not to evaluate teachers, but rather to investigate how they provide instruction for the skill of listening and the extent to which the espoused beliefs and classroom practices stated in the questionnaire corresponded to their actual classroom practices. Observations were used to raise issues for further investigation in interviews, and also as a source of triangulation to support the validity of the research. All observations were audio-recorded and utilized as a prompt for subsequent stimulated-recall interviews that elicited the cognitions underlying participants’ classroom practices. Teachers reviewed audio-recorded episodes relevant to teaching the skill of listening, and revealed the cognitions that informed their classroom practices.

Prior to carrying out the observations, I designed a guide that included common techniques used in the teaching of listening (see Appendix E), based on research and existing scholarly literature on listening pedagogy. This guide was not intended to be comprehensive, since some classroom activities did not fit into these categories; for example, one teacher asked students to listen to all the spoken texts at home before the lesson, and another teacher provided learners with the transcript of a text with some gaps in the transcript. Students were asked to fill in the gaps based on their knowledge of the text after they listened. These classroom practices were evaluated separately. Throughout the observations, the guide helped me to make detailed field notes on different aspects of the teaching of listening that I observed.

3.3.3 Interviews

Interviewing is a versatile and effective strategy that provides valuable data in qualitative research, especially in studies where participants are knowledgeable and articulate (Dörnyei, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Although classroom observations provide information about different approaches adopted by teachers and the practices that are informed by these approaches, interviewing is a powerful interactive research tool that gives researchers insights into participants' perspectives, and the assumptions and beliefs underpinning their classroom practices (Borg, 2015; Mangubhai et al., 2004). Interviews are frequently employed together with other instruments such as observations and questionnaires to provide a way of eliciting reflective comments from participants, as well as a means of triangulating data sources (Borg, 2015; Dörnyei, 2007; Patton, 2002). However, interviewing requires linguistic and social skills on the part of the researcher as well as a good understanding of the context and the topic under investigation (Roulston, 2010). The interaction between interviewer and interviewee plays an important role, since skilled interviewers can bring about a positive interaction and establish rapport by being accepting, non-judgemental, tolerant, and courteous (Merriam & Tisdell,

2016). For this study, I endeavoured to establish an honest, trusting relationship with interviewees, and spent time with them during classroom breaks to talk with them socially about local issues related to living and teaching in Iran. I think these casual conversations helped to establish some rapport between myself and the participants: they freely stated their ideas during our discussions, and asked me many questions about working and studying in an English-speaking country.

Interview types can be seen as occupying positions along a continuum from structured/formal to unstructured/informal (Borg, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). They can be further divided into a variety of formats including focus group and one-to-one interviews, audio and video stimulated-recall, as well as background and post-lesson interviews. In this study, interviews were employed to achieve a number of distinct goals. They explored how teachers instruct listening and the cognitions underlying their listening classroom practices. They provided a more detailed understanding of influencing factors shaping teachers' cognitions, and the relationship between teachers' espoused beliefs in questionnaire responses and their practices.

Semi-structured interviews

Most interviews in applied linguistics and general education are semi-structured, since this interview type is appropriate for cases in which researchers have an adequate overview of the domain to generate follow-up questions to probe for further information (Dornnyci, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). They can also provide researchers with opportunities to systematically examine a domain, and to trace emerging themes (Borg, 2015; Thomas, 2009). Semi-structured interviews are widely used in studying teacher cognition, since they offer the advantages of allowing time for teachers to articulate their beliefs and viewpoints more completely and more easily (Mangubhai et al., 2004, Woods, 1996), and of generating data that

are more detailed and qualitatively richer (Borg, 2015; Dornnnyi, 2007). They also offer flexibility, since neither the exact wording nor the order of questions is predetermined (Cohen et al., 2011). In this study, semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity for the researcher to find out how teachers conceptualized aspects of their instructional practices for teaching listening (e.g. “How important do you think listening skill is in language learning and teaching?”), and the kinds of factors that shaped their cognitions and classroom practices (e.g. “Which factors are very important in shaping your personal beliefs and classroom practices in teaching listening?”). They also facilitated rapport between the participants and researcher through the use of a more conversational style of interviewing in which the researcher was able to show a clear interest in participants’ responses. This in turn might well have increased teachers’ motivation to participate fully in the study, and helped to allay any reservations they may have had that the researcher was evaluating their teaching. In this study, semi-structured interviews proceeded from general questions to examination of particular classroom practices through stimulated-recall interviews, as can be seen in interview guide (see Appendix F).

The stimulated-recall interview component

Stimulated-recall interviews offer an opportunity for teachers to articulate their perspectives on their classroom practices in which they are involved. During stimulated-recall interviews, researchers typically provide participants with video or audio recordings or written transcripts as a stimulus to help them to retrieve relevant thoughts (e.g. Basturkmen et al., 2004; Borg, 2015; Gass & Mackey, 2000). Although video recordings provide rich contextual information as prompts for interviews (Dörnyei, 2007; Gass & Mackey, 2000), I used audio recording in this study in the belief that it would not be conspicuous (Burns, 2009). I believed that video-recording might well divert teachers from their typical listening classroom behaviours, as the camera could be visible in the class and could not be ignored. In contrast, recording with a

small digital voice recorder is much less obtrusive and less likely to affect customary classroom activities and interactions, since it can be placed on the teacher's desk and, it is hoped, overlooked after a time (Breitenstein et al., 2010; Burns, 2009). I audio-recorded all classes that I observed, and used the audio episodes related to teaching listening to stimulate teachers' cognitions underlying their classroom practices. However, I was mindful of the fact that these stimulated recollections are unlikely to be exact representations of teachers' interactive thinking at particular moments during lessons (Kuzborska, 2014, Woods, 1996).

Semi-structured and stimulated-recall interviews were used as complementary data sources to enrich the data set. While semi-structured interviews offered some information about participants' background about listening pedagogy and important influencing factors which may change their cognition and classroom practices, stimulated-recall interviews provided an opportunity to elicit participants' cognition informing their actual and specific classroom practices. However, since the quality of stimulated-recall interviews can suffer as a result of time lapse between the event under research and subsequent interviews (Borg, 2015; Dörnyei, 2007; Mackey & Gass, 2005), I tried to keep to a minimum the time between observations and subsequent interviews, and this was less than two days for the majority of interviews.

Prior to beginning the main study, the interview schedules were piloted with two Iranian teachers who were not part of this study. Some minor modifications to wording of questions were made as a result of piloting; however, on the whole, participants had no difficulty in understanding the questions in semi-structured and audio-stimulated recall interviews, and I did not encounter any problem in interpreting the responses of the pilot participants. Interviews were all conducted in English.

3.3.4 Documents

In addition to interviews and observations, documentary data, which refers to any written or oral materials, were the other main source of data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I drew upon low-inference information from a number of sources including course books, supplementary materials, lesson plans, and assessments. These types of data do not influence and are not influenced by the research process (Bryman, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), and can therefore be used to corroborate other sources (Creswell, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). However, because documentary data were not developed as part of the study, their meanings and significance are not always transparent or immediately apparent and need to be deduced (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Mindful of these limitations, I included in my data set all the documents that teachers used or created during the period of data collection.

3.3.5 Summary

The above section has set out the rationale for the use of observations and interviews, corroborated by questionnaires and document data as the main data collection instruments to investigate how teachers teach the skill of listening and to capture their cognitions underlying their classroom practices. The processes of development and employment of the instruments have been explained, and some of the arguments for and against the feasibility and appropriateness of these instruments discussed. The next section presents data collection procedures and data management utilized in this study.

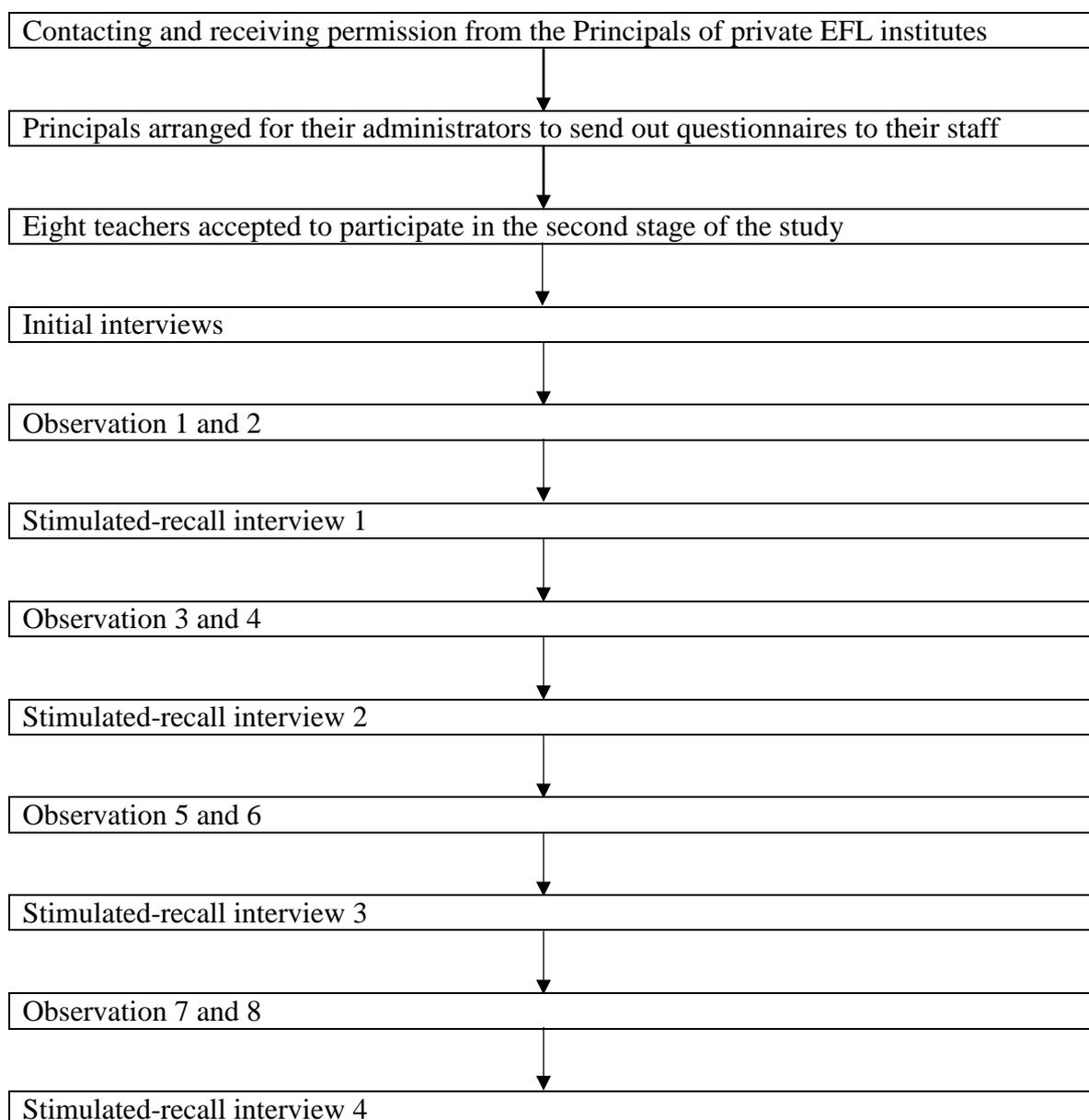
3.4 Data collection and management

Data collection took place over five months between September 2016 and January 2017. Procedures employed to collect, store, and manage data are described in this section.

3.4.1 Data collection

I employed questionnaires, observations, semi-structured and stimulated-recall interviews, and documents as data sources. In the following section, I present the sequence of procedures that comprised data collection for this study. Figure 7 presents a summary of the data collection process.

Figure 7: Data collection process



Questionnaire data

I contacted the Principals of ten private EFL institutes in Iran. Seven Principals gave their permission for staff in their institutes to be approached, and they then arranged for their administrators to send out questionnaires to their staff. One hundred and forty questionnaires were sent out to teachers who responded to the advertisement. They were asked to send their completed questionnaires to the researcher by email before the end of December 2016. Eighty-four questionnaires were returned; however, 12 questionnaires were flawed as participants left between seven to eleven questions without any response. Seventy-two completed questionnaires were received from teachers in the seven institutes, making a response rate of 51.4 percent. These were used for subsequent data analysis. Eight teachers agreed to participate in the second stage of the study (observations and interviews).

Initial interviews

Teachers who agreed to take part in observations and interviews contacted the researcher directly, and an initial meeting was arranged to meet participants in their institutes. During this meeting, some essential information about the project such as the number and estimated time of observations and interviews was explained, and participants had the opportunity to ask questions for further clarification. The non-evaluative nature of this study was emphasized, and teachers were assured that observations would endeavour to minimise any disruption to their classroom practices. Permission was sought to record the observations and interviews, and they were assured that these would be audio-recorded only. The sequence of observations, semi-structured and stimulated-recall interviews was then planned. Taking into account teachers' workload commitments and the importance of time lapse between observations and subsequent

interviews, a feasible planned procedure of one interview after each one or two observations on subsequent days was agreed to by both parties.

This initial meeting was followed by a semi-structured interview. I conducted one introductory semi-structured interview of 20-25 minutes with each teacher before the observations commenced. Since teachers' views and beliefs on a range of issues needed to be elicited, a semi-structured interview guide was used (see Appendix F). In these semi-structured interviews, participants were asked to describe their academic backgrounds, including the levels and courses taught in different private English institutes and their general teaching experience. Interviews also explored how teachers conceptualized teaching the skill of listening in terms of emphasis and teaching difficulty, the approaches teachers adopted to instruct in the skill of listening, their beliefs regarding these approaches, and potential factors influencing their cognitions and classroom practices.

Observations and, stimulated-recall interviews

The primary aim of this research was to explore listening instruction by observing teachers' authentic listening lessons and the relationship between espoused classroom practices in the questionnaire and their customary practices. It was also interested in investigating teachers' cognition in context, and influential factors shaping teacher cognition and classroom practices. To achieve these ends, the main focus in data collection was a series of observations and stimulated-recall interviews with each participant.

Over a period of four months, 6-9 observations of 90-minute classes were completed for each teacher. The observation schedule comprised one interview after two observations. To achieve dependability in data collection, the procedure was the same for all participants. Stimulated-

recall interviews were conducted on the day following each observation to capture teachers' cognitions underpinning their classroom practices. I asked teachers to listen to audio-recorded episodes relevant to listening pedagogy, and to explain and provide rationales for their classroom practices. As a result of teaching commitments, two participants were unable to take part in three interviews immediately one day after observations, and therefore these took place four to five days after each observation. In total 9-12 hours of observations and three to four hours of stimulated recall interviews were conducted with each participant over the four month period of data collection.

This long engagement during the data collection phase helped me to build rapport and trust with participants, and also provided opportunities for general conversations about aspects of English language teaching in Iran. My impression is that participants trusted that the research was non-evaluative of their cognitions and teaching practices with respect to listening, and I believe that this helped me to investigate these areas in some detail. One teacher stated:

At the beginning, I was nervous, you know, you asked me a lot of questions... and it was difficult to answer and I felt that maybe my teaching isn't OK. Now I think I know what you mean...I feel relaxed (Sanaz, 2nd interview).

Another teacher mentioned:

The interview is very good, I thought by myself it would be very difficult. I was a little edgy, especially for the first one, but you know it's OK now, and I understand you and I know the process now. I just tell you what I think about my classroom activities. It's really interesting you know when you listen to your teaching (Rana, 4th interview).

Collection of documentary data

Throughout the period of data collection, I collected relevant documents created or used by participants. These comprised teachers' written lesson plans, course books, and listening assessment tasks (see Appendices G-I). Teachers were strongly encouraged not to change their usual way of preparing lesson plans in any way. They provided copies of their hand-written lesson plans, which were then transferred into Word documents by the researcher. Unit plans ranged from 2-5 pages, and were sent to the researcher by the end of the semester. In most institutes, lesson plans were kept on file, and Principals and staff (administrators and relief teachers) had access to these files. I made photocopies of the pages of teaching materials including listening exercises and final listening assessments. My request for teachers to provide lesson plans or access to final listening examinations was complied with by all but one of the participants, and all of the Principals.

3.4.2 Data management

All raw data were stored locally on the password-protected University of Auckland computer systems. Data were organised into computer files by type: questionnaires, observations, interviews, and documentary data. Some qualitative data (e.g. interviews and field notes) were then transcribed into standard Microsoft Office applications (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint). They were further coded with each participant's pseudonym, and the date when first collected. For the purpose of long-term access, primary documents were converted at regular intervals into pdf documents. Two electronic copies of audio-recorded observations and interviews and subsequent field notes and transcripts were stored separately. Finally, final copies of field notes and transcripts were printed and stored in a large spiral-bound folder.

3.4.3 Summary

This section has described the procedures used to collect data from questionnaires, observations, interviews and documents. It has also explained key priorities for this study in terms of instruments and data collection. These were: non-interference with teachers' usual practices, and comprehensiveness of data from multiple sources related to the research site and available during the period of data collection. It has described how data from all sources were stored and managed. The next section explains the procedures of data analysis with regard to both quantitative and qualitative data.

3.5 Data analysis

3.5.1 Quantitative and qualitative data sets

Quantitative data

Quantitative data in this study were teachers' responses to the closed questions in the questionnaire. All data were entered into SPSS 23.0. Responses to different questions were numerically coded from 1 to 6. Since all data were categorical or ordinal, descriptive statistics were applied. Descriptive statistics were carried out by calculating frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation to provide information about teaching the skill of listening, teachers' core beliefs underlying their classroom practices, and influencing factors.

Qualitative data

Qualitative data for this study comprised open-ended responses in the questionnaires, interview transcriptions, field notes, and documentary data. Analysing qualitative data is not as straightforward as quantitative data since it is an uneven approach characterised by overlap between data collection, analysis and diversity (Dörnyei, 2007; Maxwell, 2012; Punch, 2013). Data collection and analysis occurred concurrently. I adopted inductive and deductive coding

procedures to analyse data according to my interpretation of the data (Dörnyei, 2007; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). Each data set (e.g. interview transcripts and field notes) was read several times to gain some sense of the main ideas being expressed through comparing, combining, reducing, ordering, and interpreting data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Miles et al., 2014). The data were then prepared, coded, and analysed following the procedures detailed below.

3.5.2 Data analysis procedures

Preparation of data

The first step involved transforming data (text or words) from observation field notes and interviews into typescripts. The audio-recordings of interviews (Appendix J) and observational notes were fully transcribed (Appendix K). All data gathered during this research were then entered into a qualitative data analysis computer program (NVivo). This program facilitated the process of storing, coding, analysing, and presentation of data (Creswell, 2012; Dörnyei; 2007).

Initial coding

The process of coding for all sources of data composed of interviews, observations and curriculum documents was the same. The existing literature on listening pedagogy and teacher cognition, as well as the study's research questions that related to how teachers instruct listening and their cognitions informing their classroom practices and factors influencing their classroom practices and cognitions, provided the researcher with a number of potential codes to analyse data deductively by applying these codes. However, data were primarily coded inductively at the beginning, since I wanted codes to emerge progressively during data collection and initial coding. Coding and analysing data started after the first interview and

observation. The procedure for analysing all qualitative data (i.e. interview transcripts, field notes, etc.) was the same. Interview questions and field notes were based on classroom activities related to pre-, while, and post-listening activities. I read transcripts several times and assigned initial codes. The coding process involved a range of activities, including labelling extracts of the transcribed data with codes, examining codes for overlap, and grouping codes into broader themes (Miles et al., 2014). In this study, the main aim of initial coding was to summarize data by assigning codes to any segments which were directly or indirectly relevant to the study. I coded data inductively and comparatively by comparing one unit of information with the next, looking for recurrent information. The example given below presents how teachers' answers to the following question was initially coded.

What is the effect of listening? First of all I think it's [uh] very much affects your speaking, because usually in different teaching books, students listen to native speakers' speaking, so [uh] by repeating them and by focusing on their pronunciation the way they talk they could improve their accent their pronunciation so they can speak better so it affects their pronunciation and accent (Sina, first interview).

Another teacher, in answer to a question about the effect of listening on other skills and sub-skills, stated:

[It] is the most important thing for them to learn how to speak. When they listen to someone who speaks so fluently they listen to him and they learn how to speak like that and other skills. I think ... listening helps speaking most (Elahe, first interview).

These answers were coded as “the effect of listening on pronunciation and vocabulary”, and “the effect of listening on speaking” respectively. What became clear after analysing this question was the need to subsume some relevant codes as there were too many statements under a particular code. The number of themes after initial coding was 36.

Prior to second-level coding, I asked one fellow doctoral candidate at the University of Auckland, who was an experienced teacher in private English institutes in Iran, to examine a sample of my first level coding of the data. I trained her in how to use Nvivo and familiarized her with my coding procedures. Following standard procedures for blind coding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), I provided her with one participant's interviews (approximately 12 percent of all the data) and initial codes to be coded again. Exchanging our codes, we found more than 80 percent reliability between the two sets of codes. Some modifications were made. For example, one code "draw learners' attention" was integrated into "make students more engaged". After comparing and further refining these codes, initial codes were agreed and finalized.

Second-level coding

I conducted second-level coding to go beyond descriptive labelling of relevant data segments to capture more coherent and cohesive categories to answer my research questions about listening pedagogy, teacher cognition and influential factors in shaping teachers' cognitions and classroom practices. To achieve these ends, I read all transcripts and codes again to reduce the number of codes by clustering similar and related codes under broader themes or categories. A theme is the same as a category or a pattern, and refers to similar codes accumulated together to shape a major idea (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I subsumed minor themes under broader categories to form broader themes. For example, the two codes in initial coding ("the effect of listening on speaking" and "effect of listening on pronunciation and vocabulary") were also coded as a theme, "beneficial effects of listening on other skills". I was looking for more evidence to support my final themes at this level. For example, another participant stated that "according to my experience students who watch a lot of movies and listen to music a lot are better speakers than the others" (Rana, first interview, September 27th,

2016). This type of evidence helped me to provide more information to support the final set of themes. I also consulted the existing literature on listening pedagogy and teacher cognition to categorize themes. This is in line with the inductive and deductive nature of qualitative study (Dörnyei, 2007; Miles et al., 2014). It means that while I started data analysis inductively, I analysed the data deductively at second-level coding to aggregate similar codes to form a theme. The number of themes after second-level coding was 12. Appendices L and M present examples of teachers' classroom practices and teachers' cognition and how they were coded.

Presenting and interpreting data

Displaying findings visually is common in qualitative research by using figures, matrices, tables, and maps (Creswell, 2012; Dörnyei, 2007; Miles et al., 2014). A visual display can be so compelling that it paves the way for immediate data interpretation without requiring additional analytical processes (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Since display cannot be considered separate from analysis (Miles et al., 2014), I used quotes and tables to present common listening classroom practices, teachers' beliefs, and influential factors.

Although interpreting data and drawing conclusions are considered as the final step of qualitative data analysis, qualitative researchers point out that data interpretation is an iterative process which starts as early as the initial coding (Maxwell, 2012; Miles et al., 2014). This perspective is in line with my approach to data analysis in this study. I drew upon a range of strategies from a number of researchers such as selecting overarching themes (Dörnyei, 2007), making meaning about issues and information based on my personal knowledge and experience and comparing it against the existing literature (Creswell, 2012), and including propositions and generalizations that were consistent with the data (Miles et al., 2014) and relevant to my research questions. However, Richards (2005) and Dörnyei (2007) warn about the tendency in

qualitative research to provide core themes to synthesise and explain different aspects of the data set, while disregarding subtlety of meanings. I therefore tried to interpret data and draw conclusions in “a delicate balancing act between trying to say something of overarching significance while at the same time preserving the intricacy of situated multiple meaning” (Dörnyei, 2007, p.257).

3.5.3 Summary

This section has set out the steps taken to prepare quantitative and qualitative data for analysis. Key principles of the research with regard to coding and analysing of both quantitative and qualitative data have been provided. The section has described how final conclusions were drawn. The next section discusses the quality criteria used to evaluate the methodology of the study.

3.6 Evaluation of methodology

This section addresses quality criteria in both qualitative and quantitative research. I centred my discussion on trustworthiness based on the four components of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

3.6.1 Quality criteria

In what follows, I evaluate my choices for data collection and analysis procedures under the broad concept of trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness (credibility)

Qualitative researchers conceptualize validity holistically under the rubric of trustworthiness as an appropriate concept for qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lincoln & Guba,

1985). Trustworthiness is an attribute that is relative and context dependent, and has to be assessed based on purposes and conditions of the research (Maxwell, 2012; Mishler, 1990). Defining flexible criteria and considering situational conditions and research purposes, as well as practical issues can help to rule out threats to trustworthiness (Irwine, 2008; Maxwell, 2012). A practical method was therefore adopted to evaluate the methodology of this study which evaluated trustworthiness based on credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The criterion of credibility is the qualitative counterpart of internal validity in quantitative research, and refers to the extent to which research results match external reality (Lincoln, & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Since teacher cognition is a multi-faceted, complex and not always orderly construct, understanding and interpreting the accounts provided by participants was not always a straightforward process. To ensure the credibility of findings, I used a range of methods which, although they do not guarantee credibility, can help to mitigate potential threats. Member checking was utilized as a democratic technique for establishing credibility which involves participants working together with the researcher (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This enabled me to solicit feedback from participants on the emerging accounts from observations (field notes) and interviews. At the end of data collection procedures, I asked participants to read through the profiles that I had created for each of them, and that included information about their beliefs and classroom practices from the observations and interviews (see Appendix N). I encouraged them to make changes to their profiles if they felt there were any discrepancies between their own understanding of their teaching procedures and beliefs and mine. Eight participants reported being satisfied with the accuracy of their profiles, while two participants offered some

modifications such as changing “teaching all new words before listening” to “teaching some new words before listening”.

Prolonged engagement in the field is another technique for establishing credibility (Dörnyei, 2007; Maxwell, 2012). Data for this study were collected over a period of four months. The length of the data collection period helped the researcher to spend more time with participants to capture the complexities of their cognitions and classroom practices. It allowed the researcher to observe participants’ customary classroom practices, and to explore their beliefs, decisions and classroom practices by conducting multiple observations and interviews. My impression is that while some teachers may have emphasized listening more at the beginning of the study, they soon reverted to their customary classroom practices after becoming accustomed to the presence of the researcher.

The neutrality and integrity of the researcher is another important consideration (Patton, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). However, being an English teacher in Iran and teaching more than five years in these private institutes in my home province helped me to have access to my participants and establish rapport with them, but it also made it difficult for me to be objective and distance myself from the participants. Any subjectivity on my part could shape my interpretations of findings and make me privilege my own beliefs and practices. To keep to a minimum this potential subjectivity, I endeavoured to retain an interested but not judgmental attitude to participants’ teaching approaches by drawing upon their own cognitions and classroom practices through questionnaires, observations, and interviews. Curriculum documents were employed as low inference sources of data where some subjectivity was involved. I also employed an external coder to examine a sample of my coding data in order to determine credibility in coding.

Triangulation was another means of ensuring the credibility of this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Triangulation was achieved by collecting qualitative and quantitative data using a range of instruments, over a period of time, and from multiple participants and institutes in the research context of Iran.

Trustworthiness (transferability)

The criterion of transferability is the qualitative counterpart of external validity in quantitative research (Dörnyei, 2007, Lincoln, & Guba, 1985). Although qualitative research engages in in-depth investigations of particular contexts and participants to elicit unique culturally and historically situated knowledge, it may still be possible to find resonances with other similar contexts, circumstances, and populations (Charmaz, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010). The transferability of this study is enhanced by providing detailed descriptions of the setting and participants, as well as the courses, which permits readers to verify the extent to which their settings are similar and whether the findings of this study can also be applied to their contexts. This is what Merriam and Tisdell (2016) calls “reader or user generalizability” (p. 257).

Trustworthiness (Dependability)

The criterion of dependability is the qualitative counterpart of reliability in quantitative research (Dörnyei, 2007; Lincoln, & Guba, 1985). Dependability refers to the extent to which findings can be replicated and corroborated. Dependability is problematic in qualitative research since, due to the dynamic nature of human behaviour, it is impossible to control the phenomena under study and to exactly replicate studies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Wolcott, 2005). The findings of qualitative studies are also shaped by researchers’ personal

interpretations and participants' accounts, and there is therefore no benchmark by which to establish dependability in the traditional sense (Borman, LeCompte, & Goetz, 1986; Wolcott, 2005).

Mindful of these constraints, efforts were made in this study to achieve dependability and consistency by triangulation (employing different sources of data), and precision in data analysis. In order to assist any similar future studies that may want to follow my approach, I provided an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) with detailed descriptions of how data were collected, coding categories derived, and decisions made. Also with the intention of enhancing dependability, I elicited the same questionnaire information from each participant, asked participants the same questions during semi-structured interviews, and conducted the study observations and stimulated-recall interviews using procedures that were as similar as possible for all participants. To evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was initially administered to 30 English teachers in Iran who were not part of this study. The reliability of the data was calculated through Cronbach's alpha. The reliability indices for Sections A to D were 0.791, 0.827, 0.806, and 0.793 respectively. The whole questionnaire had a high level of reliability, as determined by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.801. When the questionnaire was subsequently administered to participants in the main study ($n = 72$), the reliability of the whole questionnaire was 0.803.

Trustworthiness (Confirmability)

The criterion of confirmability, or the neutrality of the findings, is the qualitative counterpart of objectivity in quantitative research (Dörnyei, 2007; Lincoln, & Guba, 1985). Qualitative studies have been critiqued on account of subjectivity (Maxwell, 2012; Miles et al., 2014). For this study, an audit trail was the main strategy employed to ensure that the findings were

participants' accounts. To achieve this end, detailed descriptions of data collection and analysis was provided, how categories were derived, and conclusions were arrived at. Examples of data analysis and coding are presented in the text and interpretations are backed up with extensive quotations from the data. The existing body of literature on teaching the skill of listening and teacher cognition was also used as a complementary source of information to be compared with teachers' listening classroom practices and rationales behind them.

3.6.2 Summary

This section has accounted for the choice of combining quantitative and qualitative research instruments to collect a considerable quantity of data to ensure the trustworthiness of this study. It has explained how prolonged engagement, triangulation, and detailed description offered in this study supported the truth-value of the collected data and enhanced credibility and transferability (internal and external validity).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research design underpinning this study, the selection and suitability of the pragmatic paradigm, and the rationale of adopting mixed methods at the data collection and analysis stages. It has explained the context of the study, including the courses and institutions in Gilan province in Iran, and described the stages of purposeful sampling that were used to select participants. This chapter has also presented the research instruments, data collection and data analysis procedures that were used. Criteria used to evaluate the trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of research procedures and the data that were produced have been explained. The findings of the study and discussion of the outcomes, drawing on data gathered from three different sources of data (questionnaires, observations, and curriculum documents) are presented in the next chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

Classroom practices for L2 listening instruction

This chapter reports on and discusses the outcomes of questionnaire responses and observations in order to answer the first research question: what classroom practices characterise EFL teachers' teaching? The first section presents and discusses the results from relevant sections of the questionnaire (Parts B and E). The second presents and comments on the findings of classroom observational data. Parts A, C, and F are reported in Chapter five; while Part D is reported in Chapter Six.

4.1 Questionnaire results

In questionnaire responses in Part B (see Appendix D), participants were invited to rate each classroom practice on a six point scale, ranging from Never (1) to Always (6). Descriptive statistics including simple frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated to investigate the extent to which teachers follow a conventional format of teaching listening (pre-, during, and post-listening). As pointed out in Chapter Three, all data were categorical or ordinal. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the quantifiable data. Although it is acknowledged that descriptive statistics are limited since they can only describe the data at hand rather than enable wider inferences to be drawn, it was decided not to undertake inferential analyses, for the following reasons. T-tests were not employed as this study did not focus on comparing groups (e.g. English teachers in private English institutes and public schools). In addition, Chi-square tests were not conducted as there were not any nominal data such as gender or experience and novice teachers. Due to the low sample, it was not possible to undertake a Factor Analysis. This analysis usually needs more than 100 participants; at least 10 participants for each variable (Riazi, 2016). Table 2 shows the results of practices in relation

to these three phases based on descriptive analysis. The numbers in the table present the frequency of responses, while the numbers in brackets show percentages.

Table 2: Questionnaire responses regarding practices pre-, during and post-listening: Part B (N=72)

Statements	Responses						Mean	SD
	N	O	S	F	U	A		
Before listening								
1. I set the context (who is speaking, where, and why).	2(3)	3(4)	9(12)	5(7)	18(25)	35(49)	4.93	1.377
2. I ask them what they know about the topic.	3(4)	4(6)	14(19)	7(10)	18(25)	26(36)	4.54	1.491
3. I teach new vocabulary that is essential for understanding.	2(3)	11(15)	8(11)	16(22)	19(27)	16(22)	4.21	1.453
4. I teach all new vocabulary.	32(45)	13(18)	10(14)	6(8)	8(11)	3(4)	2.36	1.577
5. I ask them to predict possible answers to the questions.	9(12)	20(28)	10(14)	13(18)	10(14)	10(14)	3.35	1.637
During listening								
6. I ask students to listen again.	2(3)	4(6)	24(33)	5(7)	20(28)	17(23)	4.22	1.416
7. I ask questions for general understanding (e.g. the gist and main idea)	2(3)	5(7)	10(14)	12(17)	16(22)	27(37)	4.61	1.430
8. I ask questions for details (e.g. time, dates, and directions)	4(6)	13(18)	12(17)	9(12)	22(30)	12(17)	3.94	1.546
9. I ask students to verify their predictions.	7(10)	9(13)	15(20)	17(24)	14(19)	10(14)	3.72	1.513
10. I ask students to focus on key words.	5(7)	9(13)	13(18)	14(19)	17(24)	14(19)	3.99	1.534
After listening								
11. I ask students what their answers are.	1(1)	2(3)	3(4)	5(7)	12(16)	49(69)	5.39	1.120
12. I repeat spoken texts to help learners answer sets of questions.	8(11)	14(19)	14(19)	11(16)	17(24)	8(11)	3.54	1.574
13. I provide learners with correct answers.	1(2)	4(6)	4(6)	8(11)	11(15)	44(60)	5.17	1.289
14. I ask learners to participate in verbal interactions to negotiate meaning.	3(4)	5(7)	8(11)	11(15)	26(36)	19(27)	4.51	1.394
15. I ask them how they arrived at answers.	7(10)	11(15)	16(22)	12(17)	15(21)	11(15)	3.69	1.571
16. I advise learners how to deal with future difficulties.	6(8)	10(14)	23(32)	8(11)	16(22)	9(13)	3.63	1.496

N: never; O: occasionally; S: sometimes; F: frequently; U: usually; A: always

As can be seen from the table, and according to these self-report data, all three phases (pre-, during, and post-listening) received attention from teachers, and they used a range of practices in each phase. Classroom practices that were reported as frequent in pre-listening were *setting context* (1), *activating background knowledge* (2), and *teaching essential new words* (3), which can be categorized as top-down practices (i.e. those that synthesize context and background knowledge for general understanding). Teachers reported using the *strategy of prediction* (5) less frequently, with only 28 percent reporting usually or always selecting this strategy. Almost half of the teachers (49%) reported that they usually or always introduce only key words (i.e. teaching words that are essential for general understanding in the pre-listening phase); however, only 11 teachers (15%) reported any *comprehensive teaching of new vocabulary* (4) even though this advice is frequently included in scholarly texts (e.g. Richards & Burns, 2012; Field, 2008; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). Questionnaire responses therefore showed that almost all of the teachers (91%) used the pre-listening phase to activate learners' background knowledge and prepare them by setting the context, and by creating motivation to listen to the spoken text and complete the task.

With regard to tasks that learners were required to complete during the listening period, questionnaire responses indicated that the main focus of teachers was on learners' *general understanding of spoken texts* (7), with 59 percent of respondents reporting that they *usually* or *always* ask learners some questions to check general comprehension while they listened to the task. The second commonly used classroom practice was asking students to *listen again to the recorded text* (6), and more than half of the teachers (58%) stated that they *frequently*, *usually* or *always* used this classroom practice. While many teachers emphasized general understanding by asking comprehension questions as well as replaying the text, more than three

quarters of teachers (77%) reported that they *usually* (33%) or *always* (44%) asked learners to *verify their predictions* (9) and *focus on key words* (10).

Teachers' main concern in the post-listening phase was ensuring general understanding, and the most commonly reported practices were related to *examining answers* (11) in order to check the degree to which learners were successful in completing the task. Most teachers (85%) reported that they *usually* or *always* checked learners' answers as the most common post-listening practice, and three quarters of the teachers reported *providing learners with correct answers* (13). In addition, 63 percent of teachers reported requiring learners to participate in pair or group work to *negotiate meaning* (14). Questionnaire responses showed that *repeating the text* (12) was the least frequently used instructional strategy, and almost one third of teachers (30%) *never* or *occasionally* replayed the listening text. One-third of teachers (36%) reported that they *usually* or *always* checked *how learners had arrived at their answers* (15), almost half of the teachers (47%) *never* or *occasionally* reported these classroom practices. These responses suggest that paying attention to the product (result) rather than the process of listening was teachers' main concern.

Questionnaire responses revealed that, on the whole, classroom practices were in line with the conventional format of teaching listening found in scholarly texts (e.g. Richards & Burns, 2012; Field, 2008; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). However, most teachers reported requiring learners to work in group to *negotiate meaning* (14), which is a classroom practice not included in the conventional format of teaching listening. In general, teachers' main focus in the pre-listening phase was activating learners' background knowledge and teaching some key words to help task completion; while during the listening period and in the post-listening phase their main emphasis was on checking students' comprehension of the spoken text.

In the second section of Part B of the questionnaire, respondents were asked whether or not they employed specific listening classroom practices. In the first section of Part B, teachers were asked to identify certain practices that they customarily used in the pre-, during- and post-listening phases of instruction, and, in the second, teachers identified practices that drew on different approaches in teaching listening. To identify common classroom practices utilized by teachers, respondents were again required to rate each classroom practice on a six point scale, ranging from Never (1) to Always (6). Their responses are shown in Table 3. The numbers in the table show the frequency of responses, followed by the percentage of teachers (*italicised and in brackets*).

Table 3: Teachers' reported classroom practices for the skill of listening: Part B (N= 72)

Statements	Responses						Mean	SD
	N	O	S	F	U	A		
1. Ask learners to transcribe some listening input	8(11)	13(18)	15(21)	9(13)	14(19)	13(18)	3.65	1.663
2. Ask learners to listen and repeat	3(4)	12(17)	21(30)	14(19)	8(11)	14(19)	3.75	1.480
3. Ask learners to follow the script of the spoken input	9(13)	17(23)	21(29)	11(15)	5(7)	9(13)	3.18	1.514
4. Ask questions to evaluate general understanding (e.g. main idea and the gist)	1(1)	2(3)	4(5)	5(7)	19(26)	41(58)	5.25	1.135
5. Draw learners' attention to precise words	3(4)	5(7)	17(24)	19(26)	18(25)	10(14)	4.03	1.311
6. Combine listening and speaking	1(2)	3(4)	7(9)	12(17)	31(43)	18(25)	4.71	1.156
7. Combine listening and reading	10(14)	12(16)	22(31)	13(18)	14(20)	1(1)	3.17	1.343
8. Watch types of entertainments (e.g. cartoons, movies, series, and advertisements)	1(2)	12(16)	14(20)	21(29)	19(26)	5(7)	3.83	1.233
9. Discuss the topic of listening input	1(2)	3(4)	7(10)	12(16)	28(39)	21(29)	4.75	1.184
10. Discuss listening difficulties	6(8)	16(22)	19(27)	16(22)	8(11)	7(10)	3.35	1.416
11. Listen out for words they predict they may hear	6(8)	16(22)	20(28)	16(22)	9(13)	5(7)	3.29	1.358
12. Draw learners' attention to grammatical units in spoken texts	9(13)	27(37)	16(22)	7(10)	11(15)	2(3)	2.86	1.356
13. Keep a log of how they approach listening (i.e. how they complete tasks)	13(18)	25(35)	19(26)	11(15)	4(6)	0(0)	2.56	1.124
14. Clarify the objectives of an anticipated listening task and/or proposing strategies how to handle it	1(1)	22(32)	11(15)	16(22)	14(19)	8(11)	3.61	1.420
15. I ask students to write a summary of what they listened or watched.	7(10)	24(33)	17(23)	12(17)	9(13)	3(4)	3.01	1.337

N: never; O: occasionally; S: sometimes; F: frequently; U: usually; A: always

Questionnaire responses indicated that teachers frequently (84%) reported the importance of comprehension, and asking questions to evaluate general understanding (4) was the most frequently reported classroom practice. More than half of the teachers (58%) reported that they always *asked comprehension questions* (4). Many teachers emphasized “bottom-up” practices (i.e. analytic strategies such as understanding at sound and word level, and piecing together smaller units of information to achieve a more comprehensive understanding). Many teachers (65%) reported that they *frequently, usually or always paid attention to precise words* (5) followed by *listening and repeating* (2), reported by almost half of the teachers (49%). The least frequently reported practice in this category was *simultaneous listening and following script* (3), and 26 respondents (36%) *never or occasionally* used this practice.

Synthesising or top-down practices that were *usually* or *always* used by teachers included *discussing the topic of listening* (9) stated by 49 teachers (68%) and *talking about listening difficulties* (10) reported by 22 participants (30%). Since L2 teaching approaches and materials based on the underlying assumptions of CLT in private English institutes, it was surprising that analytic, pre-communicative practices such as *listening and repeating* (49%) and *transcribing* (50%), both of which focus on helping learners to discriminate between sound and form in the new text, were among those reported as being frequently used. It can also be seen from Table 3 that most teachers reported that they *usually* or *always* taught listening together with other skills, with *combining listening with speaking* (6) being the most common combination (reported by 68% of participants) and *listening with grammar* (12) the least common choice (18% only). This suggests that many teachers considered listening to be a more effective source of input when employed with other skills.

Concerning the *use of authentic materials* (8), practices that involved watching movies and cartoons were employed by a considerable number of participants, with 55 percent reporting that they *frequently* or *usually* used these materials. As in the first section of Part B, half of the teachers (52%) stated that they *frequently, usually* or *always* employed some listening strategies to *teach learners how to deal with a listening task* (14); for example, ways of completing a listening task despite unknown words or not being able to hear or understand part of the spoken text. In addition, some teachers (42%) reported that they *frequently, usually* or *always* encouraged *prediction* (11). However, *keeping a teacher-log* (13) of how learners approached listening did not appear to be part of teachers' instructional repertoires, with 38 teachers (53%) *never* or *occasionally* using this practice, and 16 percent of teachers stating that they only *occasionally* used this practice.

The results of both sections of Part B showed that teachers reported using a range of different classroom practices to teach listening based on the conventional three-phase format of pre-, during, and post-listening; however, a number of frequently reported practices such as listening and repeating, transcribing some spoken texts, as well as requiring students to work in pairs to negotiate meaning, were not entirely consistent with advice presented in scholarly texts (Richards & Burns, 2012; Field, 2008; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). On the whole, the most common instructional strategies and practices were arrangements of bottom-up and top-down practices, comprehension questions, listening combined with other skills, authentic materials, and instruction to raise students' awareness of a range of listening strategies. Asking comprehension questions was the most commonly reported classroom practice.

In the final section of the questionnaire (Part E), open-ended prompts elicited information about the three or four most commonly reported classroom practices employed for listening

instruction. Table 4 shows the main categories of practices that teachers reported in the order of those most frequently reported.

Table 4: Categories of teachers' practices for teaching listening (Part E)

Categories of common classroom practices		Total number of classroom practices
1	Discuss the topic of listening	38
2	Ask comprehension questions	28
3	Pre-teach some new words	26
4	Clarify the task demand and set the context	16
5	Teach general listening strategies	15
6	Replay the task	13
7	Listen and repeat	11
8	Transcribe	10
9	Use authentic materials	9
10	Focus on key words	9
11	Combine listening and speaking	9
12	Predict answers	7
13	Draw learners' attention to listening	7
14	Focus on details	5
15	Check answers	5
16	Combine listening and vocabulary	3
17	Dictation	3
18	Ask learners to follow transcript	2
19	Combine listening and pronunciation	2
20	Combine listening and writing	1
21	Combine listening and grammar	1

As can be seen from the table, the most common classroom practice reported in Part E of the questionnaire was *discussion of the topic of listening* (1). Items in this category ranged from

questions relevant to the topic of the listening, elicitation of learners' ideas about the topic and contextualization of listening texts. In contrast to teachers' responses to the closed questions related to the common classroom practices teachers reported in Part B, *asking comprehension questions* (2) did not appear to be their main priority. The practices that teachers reported using less frequently were combining listening to other skills and sub-skills (vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar), except *combining listening and speaking* (11). In contrast to teachers' responses in Part B, top-down practices such as *pre-teaching some new words* (3), *clarifying the task demand* (4) (e.g. telling students how to complete the task and type of answers), and *focusing on key words* (10) were reported as being used more frequently than bottom-up practices. It is also interesting that while two synthetic (bottom-up) practices (e.g. dictation and simultaneous listening and following script) were more frequently employed in closed questions in Part B (statements 1 and 3), in this section they were among the practices that teachers reported using relatively infrequently. However, teachers stated that they used other bottom-up practices such as *replaying the task* (6), *listening and repeating* (7), as well as *transcribing* (8) more frequently.

With regard to other classroom practices reported in the questionnaire, those appearing under *clarifying the task demand and setting the context* (4) addressed different classroom practices such as understanding the task format (e.g. multiple choice/ filling in the blank), task completion procedures (e.g. write no more than three words), and clarifying the context (e.g. conversation or interview). Teachers' main priority was clearly to help learners to complete all task questions, and they appeared to conceive effective listening and effective listening instruction as largely a matter of successful task completion. In spite of this emphasis on task completion, 15 teachers reported using a number of instructional practices to explicitly teach strategies for how to listen more effectively. Teachers' responses also indicated that teaching

listening strategies was ranked as the fifth most commonly used instructional practice. Ten teachers directly stated that they taught listening strategies, and in further responses they gave some examples that included taking notes, reading questions in advance, and paying attention to key words.

4.2.1 Summary

Questionnaire responses revealed that teachers' instructional practices for listening included attention to all three phases of teaching listening; however, pre-listening practices appeared to be used with greater frequency. Although teachers drew on a range of bottom-up and top-down practices to teach the skill, their main priority was the fundamental aim of preparing and supporting learners to be able to comprehend spoken texts and complete listening tasks.

4.2 Discussion of questionnaire results

The previous section reported on teachers' responses in Parts B and E of the questionnaire with respect to customary instructional practices for the skill of listening. Most teachers reported that they usually or always set the context (74%), discussed the topic of the spoken text (61%), and taught only key words (49%) in the pre-listening phase. It therefore appears that their main aims in the pre-listening phase were to activate learners' background knowledge of the text, and encourage positive motivation and engagement with the text and listening tasks. Questionnaire responses also indicated that during the period of listening, teachers gave emphasis to increasing exposure to the spoken text by allowing repetitions. In the post-listening phase, teachers paid attention to both processes and products of listening. As Part B in the questionnaire included the customary classroom practices based on conventional models of teaching listening, it is possible to say that teachers' stated listening classroom practices to some extent followed this conventional format. They reported giving attention to all three

phases of teaching listening (pre-, during, and post-listening). They also emphasized activating background knowledge by discussing the topic of listening and setting the context, asking general questions to check comprehension, and providing learners with the correct answers. All of these activities follow the scholarly advice with regard to listening instruction (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Nation & Newton, 2009; Wilson, 2008).

Although their instructional practices were mostly quite conventional, some diverged from the advice offered in scholarly texts (e.g. Richards & Burns, 2012; Nation & Newton, 2009). Less orthodox practices included listening and repeating, transcribing, and negotiating meaning of particular aspects of the spoken text content in groups. Interestingly, while the first two practices would typically be regarded as non-communicative, tasks that require negotiation of meaning are very much part of CLT. One likely explanation for the use of non-communicative practices such as dictation is that it serves to develop students' listening discrimination skills by requiring them to focus on small differences between oral and written forms of input in the L2 (Goh, 2002; Hulstijn, 2001; Kiany & Shiramiry, 2002). Another explanation might be that, due to differences between the pronunciation of L1 speakers of English in the recorded texts and Iranian EFL teachers (e.g. pronunciation of some sounds, rhythm, and sentence stress), dictation can make learners aware of the potential complexities of understanding texts by different speakers (Kiany & Shiramiry, 2002).

Questionnaire responses indicated that teachers' most common listening classroom practice was discussing with students the topic of the spoken text that they were to listen to. These class discussions served to activate learners' background knowledge, and shows that their conceptualizations of listening were not confined to comprehension by learners of the discourse of the text, but encompassed building on their prior understanding of and current interest in the

topic. Teachers' instructional preferences are supported by evidence that learners' background knowledge needs to be taken into account and activated (Gass, 2013; Schmidt-Rinehart, 1994; Tyler, 2001). It is also in line with a principle of CLT that contextualization of listening instruction has a significant effect on listening pedagogy (Brown, 1987).

Comprehension questions were teachers' main reported classroom practice among closed questions in Part B, and the second most frequently reported classroom practice in Part E. Teachers' extensive use of questions to ensure and improve comprehension confirms the claim by a number of scholars that listening pedagogy is still influenced by and based on key characteristics of the comprehension approach. The approach is teacher-centred. It draws on extensive use of questions to check general understanding and focuses on the products (results) of listening, not the processes (Goh, 2010; Field, 2008; Siegel, 2015). The importance of bottom-up approaches to improve word recognition skills and prosodic cues is generally acknowledged (Hulstijn, 2003; Kurita, 2012). Scholars are also in agreement with the teachers in this survey that integrating bottom-up and top-down strategies in the teaching of listening provides learners with the best assistance to develop their skill (Field, 2008; Hulstijn, 2003; Nunan, 2002).

Teachers' statements about the way they teach the skill of listening also revealed that they introduced students to particular strategies to help them comprehend spoken texts effectively. The importance of teaching metacognitive strategies to improve the skill of listening has been discussed comprehensively in the literature (Bozorgian, 2012; Goh & Taib, 2006; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010), and scholarly advice on these topics emphasizes raising learners' awareness of strategies that can have beneficial effects on their comprehension in different ways. These include alleviating anxiety and enhancing learners' confidence and motivation.

However, in general, teachers in this survey conceptualized effective listening instruction in a more fundamental way, that of developing learners' ability to answer questions and complete activities in response to a spoken text stimulus. They therefore prioritised practices such as providing correct answers and checking general understanding, rather than preparing students to cope with new, unpredictable difficulties in other listening tasks. This main priority confirms the claim by Graham et al. (2014) with regard to effective listening skill development in their questionnaire responses in the UK; namely, that "listen[ing] effectively [also] seemed to be conceptualised by respondents as effective task completion" (p. 53).

The following two sections present and discuss the findings from classroom observations.

4.3 Results of classroom observations

This section presents the findings from non-participant lesson observations of 8-12 hours for each of the eight participants. Findings from classroom observations are first presented to show all classroom practices observed in each phase of practicing the skill: pre-listening, during listening, post-listening, and post-listening extension. This is followed by a description of top-down and bottom-up teaching practices, comprehension-based practices and use of L1, metacognitive-focused practices, as well as the use of authentic materials and listening instruction combined with other skills.

4.3.1 All classroom practices in each phase of listening

Information about the context, curriculum, and participants was provided in Chapter Three, methodology (see 3.2.3, Participant Profiles). With regard to all practices, a total of 30 classroom practices were observed across the total of 96 hours of instruction observed for eight teachers. They are presented in Tables 5 and 6, according to the chronological order of practices

in each phase of listening instruction: pre-, during, post-listening, and post-listening extension. The numbers on the first row in the table show the percentage of observations in which a classroom practice was observed, while the numbers on the second row indicate the total number of each observed classroom practice.

In terms of the general format of listening instruction, in the pre-listening stage teachers usually started listening instruction by *discussing the topic of the text* (1) followed by *previewing the context* (2) and *pre-teaching essential words* (3). Teachers then *asked students to read questions before listening* (5) and *clarified/previewed the task requirements* (7). Concerning the during listening and between listening phase, teachers usually *asked students re-listen to the text and check own answers* (11) and *asked comprehension questions* (15). They also *explained and defined key words or phrases* (17). In the post-listening phase, teachers usually *replayed the recorded text* (20) followed by *asking comprehension questions* (21) and *checking/eliciting answers from students* (23). Teachers then *checked how learners arrived at their answers* (24). In the post listening extension phase, teachers generally linked listening with other skills and subskills, especially speaking and vocabulary. They sometimes *linked listening with a focus on specific pronunciation related to the text* (28) or *linked listening with a focus related to the text grammar* (29).

Teachers followed different phases in teaching listening recommended by a number of scholars (Richards & Burns, 2012; Rost & Wilson, 2013). The pre-listening phase was accorded the strongest emphasis, and almost one third of classroom practices (ten in total) belonged to this phase. It was apparent from the observations that learners benefited from being able to predict the listening content. Activating background knowledge by discussing the topic (Harmer, 2007; Richards & Burns, 2012), establishing reasons for listening through setting questions

beforehand (Field, 2008; Wilson, 2008), and identifying the listening demands and context (Richards & Burns, 2012; Rost & Wilson, 2013) are all recommended in conventional advice for teaching listening. This emphasis on the pre-listening stage in both scholarly advice and in the current study might also show the effect of CLT on classroom practices, since teachers employ this phase to activate learners' schemata and set up the context for better comprehension.

During the period of listening, teachers placed some emphasis on replaying the spoken text to provide learners with an opportunity for extensive listening, which has been identified as an effective technique (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Harmer, 2007). The use of comprehension question and eliciting of answers can help to forestall difficulties and misunderstandings, and this strategy was frequently used. It is also recommended by a number of scholars (Field, 2008; Richards & Burns, 2012). In spite of suggestions for activities addressing learners' misunderstandings and difficulties (Field, 2008), teachers used a more restricted range of activities than has been recommended in scholarly language teacher education texts. In case of misunderstandings, teachers most frequently replayed the text as a whole or in segments, and intensive listening was the most common practice. One potential justification is that after following different stages of listening instruction and using a range of techniques, teachers thought that giving students another opportunity to pick up the segments they missed for the first time would suffice. In the post listening phase, teachers usually checked/elicited answers from students that they used to check comprehension, which shows the importance that they gave to general understanding of the spoken text. The post-listening extension phase largely involved linking listening with other skills, which perhaps shows the effects of CLT principles, which emphasize integration of the four skills (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

In spite of drawing to a large extent on standard practices as described in the literature, some frequently used practices were less conventional. For example, the pre-listening phase was long and most teachers spent a lot of time discussing the topic of the text or giving information about it. An extended pre-listening phase contrasts with the recommended format that advises teachers to avoid giving students so much information that they could answer questions without attending carefully to the spoken text (Wilson, 2008). One likely explanation is that teachers tried to activate learners' background knowledge as an effective way to facilitate the comprehension of new materials. To achieve this end, teachers used different techniques that follow the scholarly advice of activating background knowledge by teaching key sentences and vocabulary (Jafari, & Hashim, 2012; Vandergrift, 2007), and prediction (Graham, 2017). Another reason to dwell on the pre-listening phase can be the effect of textbooks. Findings indicated that textbooks in Iranian private English institutes represent core principles of CLT that recommend creating opportunities for real communication, linking different skills, and personalizing learning by applying what learners have learned to their own lives (Razmjoo, 2007). It seems that teachers focused on this phase to ensure successful comprehension by learners.

Table 5: All classroom practices in the pre- and during listening phase

Teacher names	Elahe	Majid	Neda	Rana	Sanaz	Shilan	Sina	Vida	
Number of observation hours	12	12	12	9	12	12	12	8	
Observed classroom practices									
Pre-Listening	(1) Discussed the topic of the text	89%	75%	100%	83%	100%	38%	88%	100%
	Number of questions	58	37	54	38	38	18	83	39
	(2) Preview the text content	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Number of instances	9	9	9	8	10	9	11	8
	(3) Pre-teach essential words	78%	50%	88%	83%	100%	25%	100%	100%
	Number of words	15	4	23	13	16	3	20	15
	(4) Explain the meaning of other new words from the text	22%	38%	63%	50%	25%	0%	25%	20%
	Number of words	10	7	22	10	3	0	13	3
	(5) Ask students to read questions before listening	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	38%	100%	100%
	Number of instances	10	11	14	12	9	3	11	10
(6) Ask students to predict answers	67%	38%	25%	67%	13%	0%	25%	40%	
Number of instances	7	4	3	15	2	0	8	5	
(7) Clarify/preview the task requirements	100%	100%	100%	100%	75%	88%	100%	100%	
Number of instances	15	12	14	9	12	9	12	10	
(8) Ask students to take notes	11%	13%	38%	67%	13%	0%	50%	60%	
Number of instances	1	1	5	4	1	0	5	3	
(9) Break down the task	56%	13%	38%	33%	38%	0%	13%	40%	
Number of instances	5	1	3	2	3	0	1	2	
(10) Discourage use of L1	33%	25%	13%	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Number of instances	5	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	
During Listening and between listenings	(11) Ask students re-listen to the text and check own answers	100%	75%	100%	83%	75%	0%	88%	40%
	Number of instances	9	8	12	9	7	0	8	2
	(12) Check understanding of new vocabulary from the text	0%	13%	0%	17%	50%	88%	25%	40%
	Number of words	0	7	0	2	8	86	4	3
	(13) Expose students to the text in segments only	44%	0%	0%	17%	50%	38%	25%	20%
	Number of instances	4	0	0	1	6	6	3	1
	(14) Ask students to listen and repeat	11%	0%	25%	33%	0%	88%	0%	0%
	Number of instances	8	0	7	14	0	160	0	0
	(15) Ask comprehension questions	33%	13%	25%	0%	0%	75%	50%	20%
	Number of questions	16	14	5	0	0	39	51	3
(16) Ask students to follow a transcript while listening	0%	0%	38%	0%	0%	38%	0%	0%	
Number of instances	0	0	3	0	0	4	0	0	
(17) Explain and define key words or phrases	22%	25%	38%	17%	38%	50%	38%	20%	
Number of words and phrases	6	2	10	1	7	11	6	1	
(18) Translate vocabulary	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	75%	0%	0%	
Number of words	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	

Table 6: All classroom practices in the post-listening and post-listening extension phase

Teacher names	Elahe	Majid	Neda	Rana	Sanaz	Shilan	Sina	Vida	
Number of observation hours	12	12	12	9	12	12	12	8	
Observed classroom practices									
Post-Listening	(19) Ask students if they wish to re-listen to the text	22%	38%	0%	17%	25%	0%	13%	40%
	Number of instances	2	3	0	1	2	0	1	2
	(20) Replay the recorded text	89%	88%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Number of instances	24	16	21	19	21	8	18	16
	(21) Ask comprehension questions	56%	50%	50%	100%	88%	88%	88%	40%
	Number of questions	20	25	8	38	35	32	57	6
	(22) Ask students to check answers in pairs	67%	38%	100%	100%	88%	0%	38%	60%
	Number of instances	6	3	18	11	8	0	3	10
	(23) Check/ elicit answers from students	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Number of instances	13	12	18	10	12	9	14	9
Post-Listening Extension	(24) Check how learners arrived at their answers	33%	0%	13%	33%	50%	0%	13%	40%
	Number of instances	7	0	1	5	6	0	1	2
	(25) Dictation	0%	0%	13%	17%	0%	0%	0%	40%
	Number of instances	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
	(26) Link listening with communicative oral interaction task	78%	38%	75%	83%	75%	38%	13%	60%
	Number of instances	7	3	6	5	8	3	1	4
	(27) Link listening with vocabulary extension tasks	56%	13%	50%	50%	63%	88%	38%	40%
	Number of instances	6	1	4	3	5	7	4	3
	(28) Link listening with a focus on specific pronunciation related to the text	22%	13%	13%	33%	0%	25%	0%	20%
	Number of instances	4	1	1	2	0	2	0	2
(29) Link listening with a focus on related to the text grammar	11%	13%	0%	17%	0%	13%	0%	20%	
Number of instances	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	
(30) Link listening with a writing task	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	
Number of instances	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	

4.3.2 Top-down and bottom-up teaching practices

As Table 5 illustrates, all teachers used top-down teaching practices which included *discussing the topic of the text* (1), *previewing the text content* (2), and *pre-teaching essential words* (3) in the pre-listening phase. With regard to *discussing the topic of the text* (1), observation results showed that teachers used a range of questions including eliciting information about the topic

from the class/students, personalising the topic/arousing interest, and asking general and specific questions about the topic to create opportunities for reasonably genuine referential communication. All teachers except Shilan frequently used this classroom practice in their lessons and spent up to 20 minutes discussing the topic of the text before listening. I observed that teachers managed the class in a way that all students had an opportunity to take part in discussing the topic. For example, in one lesson taught by Elahe about a TV show, the teacher asked whether they liked TV shows and where people usually met each other for dating. In another lesson about public transport, Majid asked students some general questions about different means of transport that people used. Another teacher, Sanaz, elicited students' prior knowledge of the topic of a text about using a particular type of monkey to help disabled people by asking questions to elicit knowledge of other animals in similar roles.

With regard to discussing the topic of listening, teachers personalised the topic of listening and aroused learners' interest. In one lesson, Neda related a text on the topic of disagreement to students' personal experience by asking questions about disagreements with partners or family members. She asked students what they did when they disagreed with their family members. In another lesson about recognizing a picture that was about appearance, Vida asked students some questions about whether they looked like their mother or father. Teaching a listening task about a dangerous trip to the jungle, Rana asked students whether they had ever been to a jungle and, if so, what happened. Another example from discussion between the teacher and students about the word "hypochondriac" is presented below:

Teacher: Have you ever done something like this? To search on websites?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: For what?

Student: I searched for headache. It was about a headache just in the morning and I searched why it happened in the morning.

Teacher: Did you understand the reason?

Student: Yes, but when I searched, I found it was a kind of tumour (Neda, observation six)

This excerpt reveals that such exchanges also created opportunities for use of a number of referential questions by the teacher and genuine communicative exchanges in which students were able to take extended turns. All teachers used personalised questions to arouse interest and draw learners' attention to the text. Observations showed that they were successful in encouraging students to participate, since students were eager to talk and share their ideas and experience, and to activate their background knowledge.

In addition to eliciting information and personalising the topic, teachers asked both general and more specific questions in the course of general discussion about the text. For example, in a lesson about unusual marriage customs, Elahe asked students some questions about odd customs in the world, or in Iran. In another lesson about technology, Shilan asked students some questions about different types of technology and the possibility of living without technology. Examples of more specific questions included one instance in a lesson about a job interview, when Neda asked students to talk about their own job interviews. In a lesson about an interview with a film director, Rana asked students questions about other well-known films by this director.

Previewing the text content (2) was the most common top-down practice utilized in the pre-listening phase. In addition to discussing the topic of the text, thereby, giving students some ideas about the content of the text and its topic, teachers explicitly clarified the text content and helped learners by making explicit statements about who was speaking, where they were speaking, and why. Teachers emphasized reviewing the text content to make sure students were completely aware of the type of the text (e.g. an interview), the context (e.g. a TV show or a museum), how many people were involved, and the topic (e.g. diseases or news). The following

two examples illustrate how teachers previewed the text content and provided these different types of information. In one lesson about the royal family, Majid said that they were going to listen to two people talking about a painting in a museum. In another lesson about a TV show taught by Elahe, the following was said:

Teacher: You see two women and three men...One woman asking another woman, which man do you like?...They are Bill, John, and Tony...Listen to four people on a TV game show.

Teacher: How many people?

Students: Four people.

Teacher: On what?

Students: A TV show..." (Elahe, observation five)

This excerpt reveals how the key points of the context were clarified by asking general comprehension questions and assessing students' ability to listen for gist/general comprehension.

Pre-teaching of essential words (3) was the third common top-down practice in the pre-listening phase. Most teachers except Shilan used this technique in their observed lessons. All teachers tried to elicit meaning from students first, and wrote up the definitions when eliciting the meaning of a word was unsuccessful. Examples of these words usually appeared in the topic, for example "hypochondriac", "carnival", and "unusual customs". The number of essential words varied between one and five, depending on the difficulty level of the spoken text. For example, for a text about a news item, Sanaz pre-taught the meaning of just one key word: "snake charmer", and used a picture to explain the meaning. The main topic was about a snake charmer and the word was essential for comprehension. In another lesson about graphology, Neda wrote five words and their meaning on the board before listening to help learners' comprehension. It was apparent that teachers were completely aware of the potentially difficult words in each spoken text, and their students' current vocabulary knowledge.

Teachers' preparations for listening instruction can be seen in their clear idea of key words necessary to ensure comprehension and task completion.

Observation results showed that teachers also drew to varying degrees on the following five bottom-up teaching practices: *explaining the meaning of other new words from the text* (4), *asking students to listen and repeat* (14), *asking students to follow a transcript while listening* (16), *replaying the recorded text* (20), and *dictation* (25). In terms of explaining the meaning of other new words from the text, teachers used this practice at least sometimes (20% and 63%), and always in the pre-listening phase. Teachers first tried to elicit the meaning of a new word from students, but if they noticed that students did not know the meaning, they wrote up the definition on the board. Teachers probably assumed that these words were already in students' word repertoires, and they tried to activate them through reviewing. The number of new words was usually between one and four, and the session in which Elahe taught eight new words was an unusual occurrence. While four of the teachers (Elahe, Sanaz, Sina, and Vida) used this practice in one or two sessions, Neda and Rana used it more frequently in five and four sessions respectively. The approach of one teacher of a class at pre-intermediate level (Shilan) was to teach almost all the new words from the spoken text during the listening period.

Asking students to listen and repeat (14) during listening and between repeated listenings to the text was another bottom-up practice used regularly by some of the teachers and very frequently by one (Shilan). These three teachers always used listening and repeating, with the apparent aim of checking students' pronunciation. Teachers asked learners to repeat sentences to be sure about their pronunciation. Rana, Neda, and Sina first showed learners the stress and phonetics by using the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) and marking the stressed syllable, then replayed the text and asked learners to repeat. Since some sounds such as /θ/ and /ð/ (different sounds for 'th') do not exist in Farsi and students can also have difficulties

distinguishing stressed syllables, teachers tried to draw learners' attention to them. One teacher (Shilan) utilized this practice very frequently (160 instances), asking students to repeat parts of the text sentence by sentence, either individually or in chorus.

Observation results showed that the analytic practice of *asking students to follow a transcript while listening* (16) was used by only two teachers; however, they used it quite frequently in their classes during the listening phase. While students were listening for the second or third time, teachers asked them to follow the transcript. Their comments to students suggest that they used the technique to make sure of or improve learners' comprehension of new words in the text. For example, in one lesson about graphology, Neda instructed students to listen to the text while reading an audio script and highlighting any unknown words. Shilan made a similar request to her students. In one lesson about technology she instructed students to "look at the script, and when I pause, when I ask any kind of questions please answer me." (Shilan, Observation Two). In this case the teacher mainly focused on comprehension. Both teachers appeared to use this instructional practice to oblige learners to draw on the metacognitive strategy of monitoring their understanding of the text as they listened.

Replaying the recorded text (20) was another bottom-up practice that was used by all teachers in the post-listening phase. Most teachers played the recorded text twice to help students comprehend the text and complete assigned listening tasks. In almost all of the observed instances, teachers gave students this opportunity to listen twice and, in most instances, this enabled learners to answer the comprehension questions accurately. When the spoken text was difficult and long, teachers replayed the text for the third time, and four teachers gave students this opportunity to listen to the spoken text three times over two sessions. For example, in a lesson taught by Sina about family trees, students found the text very difficult and could not

answer more than a few questions. The teacher played the spoken text for the third time and this had the result of eliciting more correct comprehension answers from students.

The least popular bottom-up practice was *dictation* (25), which was used infrequently by two teachers and reasonably often by one teacher (Vida) in the post-listening phase. When using dictation, Neda and Rana provided learners with transcripts in which some words (mostly nouns or verbs that learners would not be familiar with) had been deleted. Teachers replayed the text and asked learners to listen and fill in the blanks. Vida used dictation in a different way. She replayed the text and drew learners' attention to particular aspects of its language. For example, in a lesson about appearance she asked students to write down the sentences that included "used to". In another lesson, she asked students to listen again to write down the sentences that included modals. It is possible that these practices could have been used to help students to distinguish word boundaries that are not completely clear in connected speech due to elision and assimilation. The teacher was possibly preparing learners for a form that would be the subject of future grammar instruction.

Concerning top-down and bottom-up practices in general, teachers used exclusively top-down practices in the pre-listening phase. One potential explanation is that they tried to use these practices to assist with comprehension by drawing on learners' schema or background knowledge to infer and construct the meaning of what they hear. In contrast, teachers used bottom-up practices to help understanding at sound and word levels. Replaying the recorded text, which is advised as an effective technique to obtain the parts that learners may have missed the first time (Harmer, 2007), resulted in better comprehension. Following the transcript while listening to the text helped learners to distinguish the parts of the spoken text that they could not pick up simply by listening. The beneficial effect of these practices may be due to the fact

that many misinterpretations in communication are derived from low-level errors as a result of inability to understand the meaning or pronunciation of some words in connected speech. This supports previous findings that a strong emphasis on bottom-up processing can improve word recognition skills (Field, 2003; Vandergrift, 2007) and prosodic cues such as stress and intonation (Hulstijn, 2003; Kurita, 2012). It also confirms scholars' claims that incorporating both linguistic knowledge and background knowledge in a listening classroom provides the best support to help learners develop their listening skill since they can make the listening input more comprehensible (Nunan, 2002; Field, 2008).

4.3.3 Comprehension-based practices and use of L1

Observation results show that all teachers utilized to varying degrees a range of comprehension-based practices. These were: *ask students to re-listen to the text and check own answers* (11), *check understanding of new vocabulary from the text* (12), *expose students to the text in segments only* (13), *ask comprehension questions during listening* (15), *ask students if they wish to re-listen to the text* (19), *ask comprehension questions in the post-listening phase* (21), and *check/ elicit answers from students* (23). With reference to *asking students to re-listen to the text and check own answers* (11), all teachers (except Shilan) frequently drew on this classroom practice in their observed classes during listening and between repeated listenings. After listening for the first time, teachers usually called on different students to read their responses without providing them with correct answers before asking students to listen again and check their own answers. Teachers appeared to use this technique to give students a second opportunity to find correct answers by themselves. I observed that often the repeat listening helped learners to comprehend the spoken text better, since students who did not answer some comprehension questions or answered incorrectly after the first listening were able to complete the listening task.

The second comprehension-based practice used during the listening period was to *check understanding of new vocabulary from the text* (12). Most teachers (except Elahe and Neda) used this technique at least occasionally. They paused the spoken text and drew learners' attention to the meaning of some new words. Most of the time these words were different from the key or new words that teachers taught in the pre-listening phase; however, in some situations teachers paused and reviewed the meaning of key words again such as "carnival", "hypochondriac", or "date". Teachers first tried to elicit the meaning, but if this was unsuccessful, they wrote up the word with its meaning on the board, and then continued listening. This practice did not interrupt the listening instruction, and five teachers used this technique between two and eight times in their observed classes, explaining the meaning of just one or two words each session. These teachers did not spend much time discussing the meaning of new words, which would have drawn students' attention away from the listening task. However, one teacher (Shilan) did just this very frequently in the observed lessons (86 times). After each new word she paused to elicit the meaning and then wrote up the definition on the board. She spent considerable time checking understanding of new vocabulary, even though this interrupted the flow of her listening instruction.

Most teachers also occasionally *exposed students to the text in segments only* (13) during the listening and between repeated listenings in their observed classes. Five teachers sometimes used this technique when students were not able to answer a question or students said that they could not understand one segment of the spoken text. In this case, instead of providing the correct response or replaying the whole text, teachers exposed learners to the related segment to help them by improving general understanding and

eliciting the correct comprehension answer. When students listened to the related segment again they were able to answer correctly. However, Shilan used this technique when a student could not repeat a sentence and replayed the segment to help the learner understand and repeat the sentence.

One explanation for replaying the whole spoken text or in segments is that teachers were providing learners with additional exposure to the spoken texts, which is a benefit of the comprehension approach (Field, 2008).

Asking comprehension questions during listening (15) and in the post-listening phase (21) was used by nearly all teachers. It was more common in the post-listening phase since all teachers utilized this practice in the majority of sessions (40% and 100%) of their observed classes. Six teachers also used this classroom practice during the listening period. While Rana and Sanaz never asked comprehension questions during the listening period, Sina and Shilan used this practice most: 39 and 51 times respectively. Teachers paused while students were listening to the recorded text and asked some comprehension questions. Some of them were completely general, including wh-, and open ended questions. For example, they asked students “What did you understand so far?”, “What are they talking about?”, or “What does the woman think?” All teachers also asked some closed questions to ask for details such as “How much does it cost?”, “Who offered to meet each other by the car?” or “What does he cook?” These questions were used not only to check comprehension but also to draw learners’ attention to the text. I observed that when some learners were talking and not listening to the text, teachers were able to return students’ attention to the spoken text, by pausing the tape and asking comprehension questions of these inattentive students.

Teachers also used *asking comprehension questions in the post-listening phase* (21). These questions were additional to the comprehension questions in learners' course books. After listening, all teachers usually asked some additional questions to ensure students' comprehension of the text. For example, during the listening period teachers asked a range of questions including wh-, open-ended, and closed questions. In one lesson taught by Shilan, the listening topic was about interesting books and how interesting principles could change education. After listening for the second time she asked learners to explain the principles: "Ok, you listened and I explained all the new vocabulary. What was the first principle? Can you give one example?...What is the second principle?...What was that?" (Shilan, Observation Six). Sina also asked a lot of comprehension questions to ensure learners' general understanding of the spoken text. In one lesson about food, she asked some questions such as "What is the main idea of this listening?... Ok, what is she talking about?" (Sina, Observation One). These examples show how the teacher tried to elicit more information to check and ensure comprehension by asking various questions related to different parts of the spoken text.

Although the emphasis that teachers gave to checking general understanding indicates the prominence of comprehension-based practices, integrated approaches based on a range of largely metacognitive techniques were dominant in the current study. Therefore, the study results do not support previous findings of previous research that comprehension-based practices dominate L2 listening instruction (Field, 2008; Siegel, 2013a). Instead of assigning these techniques to the comprehension approach, findings suggest that they show the effect of CLT on listening instruction which lays emphasis on conveying information and general understanding. It can also be attributed to following a number of scholars' recommendations

to replay the spoken text, check answers, and evaluate comprehension to ensure understanding (Harmer, 2007; Wilson, 2008). Using different approaches and techniques also illustrates that teachers took into account listening processes and products (text comprehension). These findings contrast with the findings of other studies that teachers consider each task as a test to evaluate learners listening ability (Goh, 2008), and that their listening instruction is dominated by the comprehension approach (Field, 2008).

Asking students if they wish to re-listen to the text (19) was another comprehension-based practice used in the post-listening phase. All teachers (except Neda and Shilan) used this technique at least once in their observed classes. Although teachers typically replayed the text twice or three times in their lessons, in some cases they asked students if they needed to listen again, usually after listening for the first time. I observed that when the spoken text was very easy and students were able to understand and answer all comprehension questions, they were reluctant to listen again, and teachers tended not to replay the text. On some occasions, students accepted a replay of the text, mostly when it was longer and more difficult. Teachers appeared to use this practice to avoid making the listening task too boring or long. It also illustrates that the listening instruction was to some extent student-centered, as learners had control over the number of text replays.

Checking/eliciting answers from students (23) was the final comprehension-based practice in the post-listening phase. Teachers in all observed lessons utilized this technique. In order to check answers, teachers called on different learners randomly and asked them to read the questions in the text book and supply answers. The following example illustrates this classroom practice. Vida said: “Ok Zahra, [student’s name] question number one. Why did he become a referee? ...Yes C is correct... question number two, Negar [student’s name]?” (Vida,

observation one). The excerpt shows that all students participated in providing responses to comprehension questions, and also that they were responsible for giving the correct answers, rather than the teacher. In case of an incorrect response, teachers encouraged peer correction as they elicited the correct answer from other classmates. If teachers felt that the student who could not answer the questions correctly needed further explanation, they would provide him/her with additional clarification. In one lesson about a sale taught by Elahe, a student said that her answer was correct and the rest of the class was wrong. The teacher explained that her response was incorrect because she had confused the number “fifty” with “fifteen”.

With regard to use of L1, teachers dealt with Farsi language in listening instruction by *discouraging use of L1* (10) and *translating vocabulary* (18). In terms of discouraging use of L1, four teachers noted this occasionally (13% and 33%) in their observed classes. In the pre-listening phase, teachers did not allow students to use their L1 to speak or translate new words while they discussing the topic of the spoken text. Teachers also avoided translating new words when their students asked for a definition in Farsi. For example, in one lesson about advice, a student asked Elahe to translate the meaning of “advice”. She declined, and provided the student with some examples to help her to comprehend the meaning. In other situations when students used Farsi, teachers immediately translated their phrases or words into English and did not allow them to continue speaking in Farsi. However, occasions when students asked for translation in Farsi were actually very infrequent in the data set. With regard to translating vocabulary (18), only one teacher (Shilan) translated new vocabulary during the listening period in most of her observed classes. She paused the text recording and provided students with Farsi definitions, or elicited answers by encouraging learners to translate the word or phrase into Farsi.

4.3.4 Metacognitive-focused practices

Most listening teaching practices (eight in total) belong to the metacognitive-focused practices. These practices included *asking students to read comprehension questions before listening* (5), *asking students to predict answers* (6), *clarifying/previewing the task requirements* (7), *asking students to take notes* (8), *breaking down the task* (9), *explaining and defining key words or phrases* (17), *asking students to check answers in pairs* (22), and *checking how learners arrived at their answers* (24). Classroom practices five to nine were employed in the pre-listening phase, practice number (17) during listening and between listenings, and the last two practices (22 and 24) were used in the post listening phase.

Asking students to read comprehension questions before listening (5) was the first metacognitive-based practice observed in the pre-listening phase. All teachers except Shilan asked learners to read the comprehension questions written in their books before listening in each of the observed lessons. Teachers assigned students one to two minutes to read questions. This activity gave learners a clear idea about the listening task and they knew that what they were looking for. In some sessions, all teachers also asked a student to read the questions aloud for the class. Teachers usually asked students whether they had any problems with understanding any question or instruction before playing the spoken text. If students were not sure about a word definition or could not understand a comprehension question, they could ask their teacher for help.

Asking students to predict answers (6) was the second metacognitive-based practice in the pre-listening phase. All teachers (except Shilan) occasionally employed this practice in their observed classes. After reading the questions, teachers asked learners to predict answers. For example, in a lesson about working in a company Sina asked students to

guess the answer of seven true/false questions. In another lesson about unusual circumstances, Vida made students guess the answers. Elahe and Rana, who used this practice more than other teachers (67%), also asked students to predict the content of the spoken text. For example, in one lesson about giving advice, after looking at the picture in the students' book, Elahe encouraged learners to guess what the text was about. In another lesson about a dangerous trip to the jungle, Rana persuaded learners to predict what happened at the end of the account. I observed that asking students to predict answers was successful in drawing learners' attention to the text, since they were usually keen to compare their predictions with the correct answer or to find out what happened in the spoken text. While checking answers, some students were sufficiently interested to want to let their teachers know that some of their predictions had been correct. Prediction appeared to make listening tasks more engaging for students.

Clarifying/previewing the task requirements (7) was another common metacognitive-based practice employed by teachers in the pre-listening phase. They explained to learners how to complete the task before listening through a variety of instructions strategies such as making sure that students understood the task (e.g. fill in the blank, match the items, write short responses), showing how to record their answers (e.g. answers must not be more than three words, write a complete sentence), and pointing out how many times they would listen to the text. For example, in one lesson taught by Sanaz, she said that:

You are going to listen to answer these questions where did it happen, when did it happen, and what was the event? So there are three events. For each one you need to write the place, time, and the type of event. (Sanaz, observation two)

The excerpt reveals that teachers used explicit statements to describe the task requirements. Students appeared to be fully aware of the listening task process and asked teachers for more

clarification if they were not sure what they were required to do. The technique enabled them to complete the listening task without difficulty.

Reading questions before listening and clarifying the task requirements were the most common metacognitive techniques in the pre-listening phase. It appears that teachers prioritised these two practices in order to enhance learners' familiarity with the spoken text and develop learners' abilities to complete the task. It enabled learners to have more control over the task and reduced their level of anxiety, since they were better prepared for the task and its demands. While teachers encouraged prediction as an effective metacognitive technique, only some teachers occasionally checked those predictions. One technique that was not used by these teachers was text modelling, where teachers think aloud about how they plan to complete a task and evaluate possible strategies (e.g. Goh, 2008). As stated by Siegel (2013a) strategies such as verifying predictions and modelling were not part of the customary practices of these teachers.

Asking students to take notes (8) was another metacognitive strategy in the pre-listening phase. All teachers (except Shilan) asked students to take notes while they were listening to the text. Observation findings showed that teachers mostly drew on this technique when they felt that the text was too long and learners could not remember all the information they would need to be able to answer the questions. In one lesson about regrets, Rana asked students to take note of five people's regrets. In one lesson about recognizing a thief, Vida asked learners to take notes about the thief's appearance. In another lesson about an experiment, Neda asked students to jot down the key parts of the experiment. Taking notes seemed to be an effective technique, and I observed that students often referred to their notes in order to be able to answer the comprehension questions correctly. However, on just three occasions teachers explicitly

explained the importance of note-taking and instructed students in how to use this technique.

One teacher (Sina), pointed out the benefits of note-taking by saying:

...Do you think it's possible to listen to this listening and remember all information...So you can take note. Do you know how to take note?...You know you don't need to write complete sentences just write some phrases including key words...In this case that's the listening task is long you just take some notes to understand the main idea and answer the questions, ok? (Sina, observation seven)

The excerpt above illustrates that teachers were fully aware of how to use this technique efficiently, and in which situations it was appropriate. They also appreciated the importance of taking notes as an effective strategy to elicit more correct comprehension questions from learners and complete long and difficult listening tasks. Although teachers used a number of metacognitive strategies to improve comprehension suggested by scholars (Goh, 2008; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012), teachers only on some occasions taught or explicitly discussed these strategies, or explained to learners how to use a technique such as taking notes. Only two teachers explained about note taking and predicting. This confirms Siegel's claim that teachers are not completely familiar with the process of putting metacognitive-based strategies into practice (Siegel, 2013a), or possibly do not see this as a priority in their instruction for learners at an intermediate level of proficiency. For whatever reason, they only rarely offered direct instruction to learners about how to use these techniques effectively (Graham et al., 2014).

Breaking down the task (9) was another metacognitive strategy used in the pre-listening phase. All teachers (except Shilan) used this practice at least sometimes (13% and 56%) in their observed classes. Breaking down the task comprised two practices in completing a multi-part task, with one part being completed after each listening iteration in the observed lessons. If the task had only one part (for example, a table), teachers divided the section into two sub-sections and asked learners to answer only one part. When teaching a text about a sale, Elahe asked students to place responses in the first column in the table, and to tick the items speakers

bought. She assured learners that they could listen again and complete two other columns about the colour and price of each item. In some tasks that had two or three parts teachers sometimes wanted students to focus on only one part. On these occasions, they explicitly clarified for learners before listening to the first part that they would be able to listen to the text again before being asked to complete answers on the content of the second or subsequent parts. For example, in one lesson about news, Sanaz asked students to listen and answer questions related to the time and place of the event in Part A. For the second round, students were required to answer questions in Part B that were related to what happened in Part A. I observed that teachers were completely aware of the length of the spoken text and task difficulty and how to make the task achievable. Whenever they used this technique, the process of task completion was easier and more achievable for learners, and teachers were able to elicit more correct comprehension responses.

Another metacognitive-focused practice used by teachers was *explaining and defining key words or phrases* (17). While listening, teachers always paused and drew learners' attention to these words or phrases. For example, teaching a spoken text about finding countries, Majid paused the text and said: "It is famous for watches. Which country is famous for watches?" In another lesson about a job interview, Neda pointed to a key phrase and she said: "he turned it down", and explained that because of this sentence we could understand that he did not accept the job. For the most part, teachers focused on key phrases; however, on some occasions they directed learners' attention to single key words. Teaching different types of advertisements, Sanaz paused and asked students why they thought the item was expensive, and she continued and pointed to the word "rip off". Examples above show that teachers apparently tried to teach learners how finding key words or phrases as an effective strategy that could help learners to understand the text or answer the questions.

Asking students to check answers in pairs (22) was the first metacognitive-focused practice in the post-listening phase. All teachers (except Shilan) frequently drew on this technique. After listening twice, teachers asked learners to check answers in pairs. They gave students one to three minutes to check their answers to comprehension questions. Teachers circulated around the classroom, and encouraged learners to work in groups. The practice was interactive, and learners compared answers and discussed divergent responses. This technique seemed to be effective, since most of the time learners were able to find correct answers before the teacher supervised the final checking of their answers.

Checking how learners arrived at their answers (24) was the last metacognitive-based practice. Most teachers at least sometimes drew on this technique (13% and 50%) to check how learners arrived at correct answers in the post-listening phase. While checking/eliciting answers from learners, especially in the case of true/false questions, teachers asked students which part of the text helped them to answer the questions. In a lesson about shopping and prices, Sanaz asked a student how she had found out it was expensive. In reply, the student pointed to one part of the conversation as the speakers said “It was a bit steep, let’s check other shops”. In the case of correct response, instructors evaluated how the answer was achieved; if the response was incorrect, they tried to trace the origin of the learner’s listening difficulties. For example, in one lesson about family trees, Sina undertook the following interaction:

Teacher: What is the answer? True or false?

Student: It’s true.

Teacher? How did you come to know?

Student: Because when he was a child he saw them.

Another student: No teacher it’s wrong... Because he said that he didn’t see his grandfather on father side.

Teacher: Yes, because he didn't see his parent on father side he was curious about them." (Sina, observation six)

The excerpt illustrates that this teacher, for example, not only focused on general comprehension but also took into account the listening processes, such as how learners arrive at correct answers.

4.3.5 Using authentic materials and teaching listening with other skills

Concerning the use of authentic materials, observation results show that all teachers except one (Neda) used these materials for listening instruction between one and seven times during the observation period. Teachers employed a range of resources such as movies, cartoons, advertisements, songs, and story books with CDs to expose learners to authentic materials that supplemented the course text. In five out of seven institutes, using these resources was a part of a curriculum requirement, and the Principals of these institutes asked teachers to show some cartoons or movies during a semester in the laboratories or classes. In the other two institutes, while teachers were not required to use authentic or supplementary materials, they voluntarily utilized these resources in their classes. Teachers who did not have large screen televisions in their classrooms were able to use language laboratories up to three times during a semester. While finding authentic materials that are manageable to low-proficiency learners can be difficult (Richards, 2006), teachers were successful in finding such materials for a range of different levels (elementary to upper-intermediate), which were considered to be not very demanding for students. Students were interested in these sources and asked their teachers to show more materials in the class. This supports the claim that these resources are very motivating with regard to addressing learners' interests and reducing their anxiety, since teachers' main concern is to improve learners' listening skills, not evaluating them through tests (Gilmore, 2011; Vandergrift, 2003, 2007).

In spite of the commonly held belief that the main purpose of authentic materials is for extensive listening and enjoyment, all teachers except one (Vida) assigned students some questions prior to listening based on the content of the material. These questions mainly evaluated learners' understanding through asking for specific information and identifying details. For example, Elahe and Sanaz wrote three or four questions on the board prior to listening such as "Who is the main character?" "What was the dog's name?" "What is the population of London?" Although using authentic resources is mostly for enjoyment, most teachers assigned students some pre-questions to check general comprehension. It seems that teachers' main priority was general understanding, not long-term communicative goals in real life, since they used the comprehension approach. Only Vida asked learners to simply listen at home to a story book about a woman called "Carmilla" (Le Fanu, 2000), and to ask the teacher for help if they had any difficulties.

Observation findings in Table 6 also show that teachers linked listening with other skills or sub-skills (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation) in the post-listening extension phase. These teaching practices included *linking listening with communicative oral interaction task* (26), *linking listening with vocabulary extension tasks* (27), *linking listening with a focus on specific pronunciation related to the text* (28), *linking listening with a focus related to the text grammar* (29), and *linking listening with writing task* (30). One possible justification for this linking might be due to the importance of listening as an invaluable source for comprehensible input which facilitates L2 learning and development of other skills. Teaching listening with other skills supports the theory that the main difference between less and more successful learners is the extent to which learners use listening for L2 acquisition (Rost, 2013; Vandergrift, 2007). It also supports the claim that listening instruction primarily targets listening processes, and not just products in the form of correct answers (Field, 2008). It corroborates the claim by

some scholars that focusing on the listening text as a response or follow-up provides learners with an opportunity to examine it for its salient features such as grammar and vocabulary (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Richards & Burns, 2012).

In terms of *linking listening with communicative oral interaction task* (26), teachers used the topics of the spoken texts as opportunities to encourage students to give their views on the topic, their feelings, knowledge, or their personal experience. After students listened to the recorded texts, teachers asked them to use phrases and words that had just appeared in the spoken text to discuss the same topic again. Listening instruction offered some opportunities for students to practice speaking in quite genuinely communicative interactions, and the following two examples show how teachers encouraged them to talk about themselves or others.

In the first example, after working on a text about graphology, Neda asked students to make their signatures on a piece of paper. Students were then required to work in groups and use different words and phrases that they learned from the text to talk about their friends' personalities as revealed by their signatures. Neda said: "So I want you to analyse your friends' signatures. You two, you two... I give you two minutes; use these words on the board [Initial, horizontal, descending, angle, aggressive, assertive, determined, legible, illegible, prominent] and then talk about your friends' signatures" (Neda, Observation Four). The excerpt shows that the task was reasonably communicative, and that some genuine communicative exchanges took place. I observed that learners used some of the words and phrases in the text to analyse their friends' signatures. In another lesson about different types of music taught by Majid, the teacher asked different questions after listening:

Teacher: So what else we listened to?

Student: Different types of music, genres, country music, jazz, hip hop.

Teacher: Ok what is your favourite music?

Student: Jazz, rap, hip hop.

Teacher: How about you Tina [student's name]?

Student: No difference I like all of them... I like teacher I listen every day.

Teacher: Who is your favourite singer?...” (Majid, Observation three).

The excerpt shows that asking different questions about the topic created opportunities for reasonably genuine communication and referential questions, and that students had this opportunity to talk about their opinions and preferences.

Teachers also frequently (between 13% and 88%) *linked listening with vocabulary extension tasks* (27) in the post-listening phase. The number of new words depended on the difficulty of the text, ranging from one word to more than ten. All teachers asked learners to write these words with their definitions. In contrast to the pre-listening phase where teachers taught key words or explained the meaning of other words in order to scaffold listening or improve comprehension, in the post-listening extension phase they used the text as a helpful source to teach new words in context. Teachers usually drew a column on one side of the whiteboard and wrote up different words with definitions, and usually added IPA symbols. These words included key words, new vocabulary, and some words that learners had already studied. After completing the listening task, teachers asked students to write down all of these words on the whiteboard, and to study them at home.

Another type of post-listening extension practice was *linking listening with a focus on specific pronunciation related to the text* (28). Most teachers at least occasionally linked listening to pronunciation in their observed classes. Teachers drew learners' attention to pronunciation by asking students to repeat a sentence or words to check their pronunciation. Rana, Neda, and Shilan first showed learners the correct stress pattern and pronunciation (using

phonetics), and then replayed the text and asked learners to repeat the sentence words. In one lesson taught by Rana, she said: “What? They were devastated. Devastate, stress on ‘d’, Ok, repeat the sentence please” (Rana, observation one). It seems that teachers were familiar with IPA symbols and that they asked students to repeat the spoken text in order to draw their attention to a specific word. Sometimes students asked the correct pronunciation of a word in a particular accent. For example, at the end of a listening task, a student asked Shilan to explain differences between the British and American pronunciation of the word “opportunity”.

In terms of *linking listening with a focus on specific pronunciation related to the text* (28), teachers used this practice in the post-listening extension phase. Teachers usually focused on pronunciation after completing the listening task and when they wanted to check new words. For example, Majid and Vida corrected the pronunciation of two words “chemistry” and “referee” when the students pronounced them incorrectly. Teachers also paid attention to rhythm and intonation. Vida and Neda drew learners’ attention to intonation as they explained that when speakers give news they pitch their voice. Neda explained that intonation differed according to the speaker’s mood; for example if the speaker was happy or surprised. On one occasion, while Elahe was checking the answers in the post listening phase, she drew learners’ attention to the pronunciation of numbers such as the difference between 14 and 40. On the whole, the explicit teaching of pronunciation did not interrupt the flow of listening instruction, since teachers usually spent only one or two minutes focusing on the specific pronunciation points that occurred in the text. They also tended to refer to a pronunciation feature after the listening task was completed.

Linking listening with a focus on related to the text grammar (29) was seldom used (between 11% and 20%) by five of the eight teachers in their observed classes in the post-listening phase.

Teaching grammar as part of listening instruction occurred in two ways. On some occasions, it was instigated by students when they asked the teacher to talk about a grammatical rule that they just listened to in the recorded text. For example, after completing a listening task, a student asked: “The guy said ‘neither did I’. What does it mean?” The teacher (Majid) then spoke about how to show agreement or disagreement by giving some examples. Second, teachers sometimes pointed to grammatical rules. For example, two teachers (Rana and Shilan), after listening to a text about people’s regrets, explained how to use “wish” to talk about regrets. Rana explained how to use past and past perfect to talk about regrets. However, teachers did not interrupt listening instruction to offer any detailed focus on grammar and, as with pronunciation, they did not allow attention to a particular sub-skill to interrupt the flow of instruction in the lesson.

Two teachers also *linked listening with a writing task* (30) in one observed session in the post listening phase. After teaching a text about a career coach, Neda asked students to listen to the text at home and write a summary of the story. After listening to a song that students liked and they were curious about the singer, Shilan asked them to search for information about the singer and write a paragraph about him.

4.3.6 Summary of results

Observation findings revealed that teachers’ instructional practices for listening included a range of classroom practices that characterise top-down and bottom-up activities, comprehension- and metacognitive-based practices and linking listening with other skills. All three phases of teaching listening were used; however, the pre-listening phase was the most emphasized, and represented one-third of total classroom practices. In spite of spending considerable time on the pre-listening phase, almost half of class time was spent on listening

or re-listening to a spoken text in order to practice the skill and complete the listening task. The post-listening extension phase linked listening with other skills, especially speaking. Teachers used simulated authentic materials to expose learners to a range of various sources such as movies, cartoons, and songs. Although they drew on a range of comprehension-based practices to teach the skill of listening, they also utilized various metacognitive-based practices to help learners develop an understanding of how to listen.

Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative findings revealed that there were not considerable discrepancies between questionnaire and observation results. Both sources of data revealed that teachers had a vast repertoire of listening techniques to teach the skill. Data triangulation showed that teachers employed a range of bottom-up and top-down strategies to enable learners to comprehend spoken texts and complete listening tasks. In addition, similarly to questionnaire responses, observation results indicated that teachers' listening instructional practices included all three phases of teaching listening; however, the pre-listening phase was more emphasized. In spite of these similarities, observations revealed that teachers used a post-listening extension phase in which they only focused on linking listening with other skills, especially with speaking and vocabulary. Both quantitative and qualitative findings supported the claim that listening pedagogy in private English institutes in Iran is in line with the core principles of CLT.

4.4 Discussion of observation results

This section discusses findings related to observational data collected in answer to the first research question about classroom practices that characterise EFL teachers' teaching. Findings illustrated that teachers utilized a range of classroom practices (31 different classroom practices in total) in their instruction for the skill of listening. These practices targeted both the products (results) of listening and listening processes by using a range of techniques based on an

integrated approach that draws on different approaches to teach listening, and providing a variety of exercises. Findings support the claim by a number of scholars that listening instruction has become more varied in L2 learning over the last fifty years with the introduction and widespread use of integrated approaches (Goh, 2008; Siegel, 2013a; Vandergrift, 2007). This shift in listening instruction can also be attributed to currently available textbooks that draw on a wider range of approaches and include various exercises and listening tasks (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). This variety contrasts with earlier formats based solely on osmosis or the comprehension approach, and the assumption that learners will improve their listening ability simply by being exposed to a large number of spoken texts (Cauldwell, 2013; Field, 2008).

With regard to classroom-based studies, the range of practices used by teachers in this study shows that they were familiar with different teaching approaches in listening instruction and had knowledge of an extensive repertoire of listening techniques. My findings support those of another classroom-based study showing that teachers in Japan were able to implement a range of listening techniques (Siegel, 2013a). However, some results in the current research are different from the findings of two other studies conducted in the United Kingdom and Taiwan that listening instruction was mostly based on the comprehension approach (Graham et al., 2014; Liao & Yeldham, 2014). Taiwanese teachers also had little more than a basic knowledge of listening instruction that was based on a test-oriented approach designed to help learners with comprehension and emotional difficulties such as exhibiting anxiety and low level of self-confidence and motivation (Liao & Yeldham, 2014).

Observation findings showed that all phases of listening instruction (pre-, during, post-, and post-extension listening) received attention from teachers, and each phase was characterised

by different practices. The pre-listening phase was applied primarily to create motivation, activate students' prior knowledge, and teach words that were essential for understanding. Teachers also encouraged the use of metacognitive strategies during this phase. During the listening phase checking comprehension was emphasized. Post listening included a wider range of activities that related to meaning rather than form. This suggests that listening instruction was based on the current model outlined by a number of scholars (Richards & Burns, 2012; Field, 2008). Based on the total number of observed classroom practices in different phases, it is possible to state that, to a large extent, teachers' listening instruction in private English institutes in Iran were based on quite conventional instructional strategies.

A noteworthy feature of the findings in this study was the effect of CLT on listening instruction by using authentic materials and linking listening with other skills. It was noticeable that the effect of CLT and scholarly advice on listening instruction motivated teachers to move away from traditional long written passages of spoken text to more authentic materials (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). It seems that the access to facilities such as language laboratories, computers, TVs, and the Internet now currently available in Iran helps teachers to use these materials. Teachers linked listening with other skills by putting emphasis on the spoken text to teach language. Although teachers were able to benefit from a listening task to develop learners' word repertoires or improve other skills, listening was not used merely in service of other skills. Teachers regarded listening as an independent skill that needed to be taught independently. They utilized a range of practices and spent considerable time to teach the skill.

While I expected that teachers would, for the most part, use comprehension questions in order to assist with task completion and comprehension by learners; the greatest variety of practices

(eight in total) can be described as metacognitive-based practices. Findings in the current study support the existing literature on listening instruction that effective listening is teachable (Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010; Yeldham & Gruba, 2016). Although the lack of explicit teaching of these techniques was noticeable, the beneficial effects of these strategies on learners' listening skills were evident. Students had opportunities to benefit from metacognitive strategies, since they enabled learners to develop their feeling of control over the listening process. Learners knew what they needed to do to complete the task, and did not usually appear anxious, despite missing some segments during listening. Their success cannot solely be attributed to using metacognitive strategies but supports scholars' claim that raising students' awareness of these strategies has beneficial effects on their general comprehension by, for example, enhancing their confidence and motivation (Bozorgian, 2012; Yeldham & Gruba, 2016), and alleviating their anxiety (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

On the whole, if the main goal of listening instruction is to prepare learners to cope with listening in real situations (Ur, 2012), it seems that most teachers in this study were able to fulfil this goal through the use of a range of instructional strategies and different techniques. It means that when teachers are familiar with different listening teaching approaches and are able to put them into practice, they will know how to prepare learners to improve comprehension and handle the multiple skills that are part of successful listening in real situations. Elahe, Rana, and Sanaz are prime examples of the participants who showed various techniques (31 in total) to instruct in the skill of listening. The use of different approaches by participants in this study to some extent supports Newton's five core components of an effective listening program (2009, 2016). While the use of extensive meaning-focused listening (i.e. making sense of messages), skills training and practice (i.e. paying attention to bottom-up skills), and strategy training (i.e. comprehension and listening strategies) were underlined, diagnosing

miscomprehension (i.e. identifying sources of miscomprehension or specific listening sub-skills) was not very noticeable. It shows that teachers in private English institutes in Iran have to some extent followed the existing literature on teaching listening by using a range of different approaches and techniques.

4.4.1 Summary

The results obtained from questionnaire responses and observations showed that listening instruction in private English institutes in Iran was characterised with a number of techniques based on integrated approaches. Teachers to some extent followed the scholarly advice on listening instruction based on the current three-phase format (pre- while-, and post-listening). Teachers were familiar with different teaching approaches and had knowledge of an extensive repertoire of listening techniques. The effect of CLT on teaching listening was also noticeable. Teachers used authentic materials, linked listening with other skills, activated background knowledge, and encouraged general understanding. While comprehension-based practices were common, it was not the dominant approach in these institutes. This chapter has contributed to current knowledge of listening instruction for learners at different levels in EFL contexts by showing that listening is an independent skill that needs to be taught independently and explicitly, using integrated approaches. As observed in the practices of these teachers, listening needs to be regarded as an essential and teachable skill in second language learning.

The results and discussion of the outcomes with regard to the second research question (teacher cognition) are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Teachers' cognitions

This chapter aims to report and discuss information obtained from questionnaire responses and interviews to answer the second research question about the beliefs and principles underlying teachers' listening classroom practices. The first section presents the findings from questionnaire responses (Parts A, C, and F) and interviews, and the second section comments on these findings.

5.1 Listening instruction in terms of teaching difficulty and emphasis

Two questions in Part A of the questionnaire (see Appendix D) asked teachers to rank different skills and sub-skills (grammar and vocabulary) in terms of teaching difficulty and to rate each skill on a six point scale, ranging from the least difficult skill (1) to the most difficult one (6). Table 7 shows the results. The numbers in the table show the frequency of responses, while the numbers in brackets (italicised) show percentages.

Table 7: Ranking skills and sub-skills in terms of teaching difficulty: Part A (N=72)

	Frequency						Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
Listening	2 (<i>3</i>)	3 (<i>4</i>)	22 (<i>30</i>)	23 (<i>33</i>)	22 (<i>30</i>)	0 (<i>0</i>)	3.83	1.007
Speaking	8 (<i>11</i>)	5 (<i>7</i>)	7 (<i>10</i>)	23 (<i>32</i>)	22 (<i>30</i>)	7 (<i>10</i>)	3.93	1.447
Reading	19 (<i>27</i>)	20 (<i>28</i>)	16 (<i>22</i>)	8 (<i>11</i>)	8 (<i>11</i>)	1 (<i>1</i>)	2.57	1.362
Writing	0 (<i>0</i>)	4 (<i>5</i>)	2 (<i>3</i>)	2 (<i>3</i>)	3 (<i>4</i>)	61 (<i>85</i>)	5.60	1.070
Grammar	17 (<i>24</i>)	14 (<i>19</i>)	17 (<i>24</i>)	11 (<i>15</i>)	13 (<i>18</i>)	0 (<i>0</i>)	2.85	1.421
Vocabulary	25 (<i>35</i>)	27 (<i>38</i>)	8 (<i>11</i>)	6 (<i>8</i>)	3 (<i>4</i>)	3 (<i>4</i>)	2.22	1.345

1: the least difficult; 6: the most difficult

As can be seen in the table, questionnaire responses indicated that most teachers (85%) considered writing to be the most difficult skill to teach (M= 5.60, SD= 1.070), followed by

speaking and listening (M= 3.93, SD= 1.447 and M=3.83, SD=1.007 respectively). Teachers regarded the skill of listening as more difficult than other skills and sub-skills (reading, grammar, and vocabulary), and only three percent of respondents ranked listening as the easiest skill for instruction. Teachers appeared to be well aware of the challenges of listening instruction and the fact that listening cannot be regarded as a passive skill to be improved without explicit teaching, since they believed that they needed to have an extensive repertoire of techniques for listening instruction. This finding is supported by evidence from Eslami and Fatahi (2008) that teachers considered themselves least proficient in teaching the skill of listening.

With regard to the second question in Part A, teachers were asked about the extent to which they emphasized different skills and sub-skills in teaching English. Teachers again rated each skill on a six point scale, ranging from the least difficult (1) to the most difficult skill (6). Table 8 below presents the results.

Table 8: Ranking skills and sub-skills in terms of emphasizing: Part A (N=72)

	Frequency						Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
Listening	0 (0)	3 (4)	10 (14)	13 (18)	34 (47)	12 (17)	4.85	1.058
Speaking	0 (0)	1 (1)	2 (3)	6 (8)	15 (21)	48 (67)	5.49	0.872
Reading	16 (22)	29 (40)	13 (18)	9 (13)	5 (7)	0 (0)	2.42	1.172
Writing	51 (72)	14 (19)	3 (5)	2 (3)	0 (0)	1 (1)	1.46	0.903
Grammar	3 (4)	8 (11)	29 (40)	19 (26)	9 (13)	4 (6)	3.49	1.151
Vocabulary	2 (3)	16 (22)	17 (24)	24 (33)	7 (10)	6 (8)	3.50	1.256

1: the least emphasized; 6: the most emphasized

Teachers' responses illustrated that speaking was considered the skill that teachers emphasized most in their classroom practice (M= 5.49, SD= 0.872), followed by listening (M= 4.85, SD= 1.058). Twelve participants (17%) actually considered listening to be the most emphasized

skill. Grammar and vocabulary were given similar ranking ($M= 3.50$, $SD= 1.151$). While writing was ranked as the most difficult skill to teach, 51 participants (72%) also considered it the least emphasized skill in teaching ($M= 1.46$, $SD= 0.903$).

The final section in the questionnaire (Part F), asked teachers to provide additional comments on teaching listening in private English institute in Iran (see Appendix D). Twenty-three teachers provided 42 further comments. The results are presented in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Categories of teachers' further comments on teaching listening in Iran: Part F

Categories	Frequency of further comments
	Total
1. Listening skill should be more emphasized	9
2. Use more authentic materials	8
3. Use listening to improve other skills and language knowledge	7
4. Improve teacher training courses	6
5. Provide more classroom equipment (e.g. video projectors, TV, and internet)	5
6. Teach learners how to listen	4
7. Take into account learners' needs	3

The table shows that approximately 22% of all comments were about emphasizing the skill of listening. Almost one-third of teachers (nine teachers) stated that teachers should pay more attention to this skill. They believed that teachers should utilize a range of techniques to instruct listening by devoting time to teach learners how to listen more effectively. Teachers believed that placing an emphasis on listening could help to bring about improvements in students' skill and language knowledge. The fact that teachers made use of every available opportunity to use language laboratories to show authentic materials such as cartoons, movies, and extra materials indicated the emphasis they placed on this skill. Their lesson plans also showed that they

instructed in listening in more than half of the classes during a semester; for example, Safoora and Elaheh included a listening component in their lessons in two-thirds of the 20 lessons they taught in each semester. Responses reported in Tables 8 and 9 showed that teachers considered speaking and listening more important than other macro-skills (reading and writing) and sub-skills (vocabulary and grammar) for communication and learning another language.

CLT has brought about more emphasis on the significance of listening pedagogy according to three concepts derived from CLT: the difference between spoken and written language, aspects of authenticity, and contextualization of listening instruction (Brown, 1987). CLT has also motivated teachers to focus on core skills such as listening for general comprehension and listening for gist (Brown & Lee, 2015; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005) and to integrate the four skills wherever possible (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Teachers' emphasis on listening can be attributed to the use of CLT in private English institutes, since classroom practices and textbooks in these institutes draw on core principles of this method (Razmjoo, 2007; Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006).

5.2 Checking/ensuring comprehension

Part E of the questionnaire also reveals aspects of teachers' cognition underlying listening instruction (See Appendix E). Participants were required to explain their three or four most common listening classroom practices. Table 10 below shows the most frequently cited reasons.

Table 10: Categories of teachers' reasons for classroom practices: Part E (N=72)

Categories	Frequency of teachers' stated reasons for classroom practices
	Total
1. Ensure/improve comprehension	66
2. Develop listening skills	45
3. Use listening to improve other skills	25
4. Activate background knowledge	17
5. Help learners complete the task	16
6. Make learners more engaged	13
7. Focus on key information	10
8. Increase learners' confidence	10
9. More exposure to listening	5
10. Develop language knowledge	5
11. Give a purpose to listening task	4
12. Focus on students' needs	2

Responses indicated that the most frequently reported (66 times) reason for specific classroom practices was that they improved the likelihood of comprehension. Another explanation under this category was to help learners complete the task (16 times), since task completion indicated learners' comprehension. Teachers referred to four bottom-up activities to facilitate comprehension: asking comprehension questions during or after listening, replaying the task, listening and repeating, and transcribing. Some teachers also stated that pre-teaching some of the new words and checking answers helped learners to complete tasks. These classroom practices show that approximately half of the most common techniques in listening instruction (9 out of 21) were utilized to facilitate comprehension.

Table 11 below presents information from the interviews about the beliefs and principles underpinning teachers' customary classroom practices with regard to the skill of listening. In

the table, teachers' explanations for their classroom practices were ranked from the most commonly stated to the least commonly stated. Teachers' statements were coded to aggregate similar codes to form themes. These themes were classified into eleven categories. The six main categories in this grouping were checking/ensuring comprehension, making learners more involved, teaching listening explicitly, using listening to improve language, and using authentic material as well as extensive listening to improve the skill of listening.

Table 11: Teachers' cognition underpinning classroom practices (interview results)

Teacher names	Elahe	Majid	Neda	Rana	Sanaz	Shilan	Sina	Vida	Total
Stated cognitions informing classroom practices									
1. Ensure/improve comprehension	10	10	14	13	11	24	14	8	104
2. Make students more engaged	25	5	13	9	8	7	13	5	85
3. Use listening to improve other skills	8	6	11	8	7	10	13	7	84
4. Help students complete the task	7	1	13	8	7	1	9	7	53
5. Activate background knowledge	1	7	4	6	7	2	5	5	37
6. Teaching strategies can improve listening	8	1	4	0	3	1	7	3	27
7. Authentic materials can improve listening	6	3	1	2	3	5	2	4	26
8. Explicit teaching is necessary	3	3	4	2	2	0	8	3	25
9. Increase learners' confidence	2	3	0	1	1	0	5	3	15
10. Develop language knowledge	6	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	9
11. Extensive listening can improve listening skills	0	0	2	1	2	0	0	2	7

These findings are similar to those revealed in teachers' responses in Part E of the questionnaire, with checking comprehension the first commonly stated explanation for listening activities. All teachers' first priority (except Elahe) in dealing with listening tasks was to facilitate comprehension. To achieve this end, they employed classroom practices such as asking comprehension questions, pre-teaching essential words, previewing the text content, asking students to re-listen to the text and check their own answers, and asking students to

follow a transcript while listening. This aim of improving comprehension is apparent in the following comment, made to justify teaching essential words before the listening activity: “they should know the vocabulary. We pre-teach key vocabulary, they should use them ... They don’t know the [new] words they cannot understand the listening” (Vida, 2nd interview). In terms of extensive use of comprehension questions, teachers argued that asking comprehension questions could clarify learners’ general understanding of the text and whether they needed to listen again or spend more time on the task. This emphasis on general understanding supports other findings that checking comprehension is teachers’ first priority in listening instruction (Field, 2008; Siegel, 2013a). It also showed the importance of teaching listening perception processes such as understanding speech at normal speed, and recognizing word combinations and words in connected speech, as recommended by a number of scholars (Cauldwell, 2013; Field, 2008; Swan & Walter, 2017).

Most classroom practices were characterised by the recommended conventional format of teaching listening that divides listening practice into three phases: pre-listening, listening, and post listening (Brown & Lee, 2015; Richards & Burns, 2012). This format is grounded in an integrated approach that includes activities that are part of CLT, and of comprehension-based and strategy-based approaches (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). Since most classroom practices followed this format according to principles of CLT, which prioritise the negotiated communication of meaning (Lightbown & Spada, 2013), this focus on comprehension appears to have been shaped by CLT approaches. Teachers’ listening instruction was characterised by a range of techniques including bottom-up and top-down activities targeting both process (activating learners’ background knowledge and teaching strategies) and product/accuracy (correct responses). However, a number of scholars contend that many comprehension difficulties are related to bottom-up strategies such as difficulties in understanding speech at

normal speed, unknown vocabulary, distinguishing word boundaries, and syntactic complexity, rather than to top-down strategies such as using the context of the passage to understand meaning, and activating background knowledge (Goh, 2017; Swan & Walter, 2017).

Another explanation for emphasising comprehension reported by all teachers was to help students to complete assigned tasks. It was the fourth common explanation (53 times) underpinning classroom activities such as replaying the recorded text in segment or completely, clarifying/previewing the task requirements, and breaking down the task. For example, one teacher gave an explanation for clarifying/previewing the task requirements and stated that:

I wanted to make it clear for the students the procedure of the things that they were going to do and also I don't want them to be confused with the different questions in tasks and by explaining it I make it clear for them how to complete it (Sanaz, 2nd interview).

Another teacher argued that breaking down a task could make it achievable for students, and she reported that: "I divided the task into three different sections because I wanted the task to be more manageable for the students" (Elaheh, 2nd interview).

With regard to teaching listening explicitly as a separate skill, questionnaire and interview findings indicate that most teachers conceptualised teaching the skill of listening as maximizing the likelihood of text comprehension and task completion. Seven teachers also reported that comprehension was their main concern in teaching listening in response to the question about their priorities in listening instruction, with Sogand and Shilan specifically mentioning students' understanding of the gist of the spoken text as their main concern during instruction.

5.3 Making learners more involved

Both questionnaire and interview findings indicated that teachers emphasized learners' involvement with listening tasks. Teachers' responses regarding the beliefs and principles

underpinning their stated common classroom practices in Part E of the questionnaire (see Table 11) show that they drew on both bottom-up and top-down activities to engage learners. Teachers usually used top-down activities such as discussing the topic of listening, talking about pictures related to the task, pre-teaching some new words, clarifying task demands and setting the context to activate learners' background knowledge and encourage them to become more involved in a particular task. They used bottom-up activities such as listening and repeating, and replaying the task to increase learners' confidence so they could improve their understanding through repeated exposure to the spoken text. Teachers also asked learners comprehension questions before listening in order to give a purpose to the listening task. For example, Elahe believed that "when they [learners] don't have any questions they don't listen carefully. This is similar to what happens in real life when we listen, we first have a purpose...when they don't have any questions there is no reason to listen" (Elahe, 2nd interview).

Interview findings indicated that the second frequently stated reason behind observed classroom practices was the need to draw learners' attention to the listening task and help them become more engaged with the task. Whereas all teachers paid attention to learners' engagement, this was particularly emphasized by two teachers (Elahe and Sina, 25 and 13 times, respectively). For example, when Elahe was asked about her reasons for pausing the spoken text and asking learners questions during the listening phase, she explained that it would help to focus the attention of inattentive learners. Sina also maintained that he asked questions not only to check comprehension but also to encourage students to concentrate. Sanaz and Shilan believed that pre-teaching key words could help students to focus, since learners are likely to lose concentration and become anxious when they encounter difficult words. In addition to asking comprehension questions and pre-teaching key words to attract learners'

attention, teachers such as Neda, Rana, and Majid commented that predicting the content of the spoken text or responses was an effective way of making students more involved. They reported that predicting the content and answers could motivate learners to follow the spoken text to check their predictions, and make them more eager to listen and engage with the text.

Two further reasons reported by teachers with regard to making learners more involved related to activating learners' background knowledge and increasing their confidence (mentioned 37 and 15 times, respectively). Interview findings were similar to those described in Part E of the questionnaire; namely that teachers employed a range of activities such as discussing the topic of the text (drawing learners' attention to the picture, personalising the topic/arousing interest, and asking general and specific questions about the topic), and previewing the text content to engage learners with the spoken text. With regard to discussing the topic of the text, one teacher commented that "I just tried to, let's say, activate their [learners] background knowledge. I wanted them to use their background knowledge in this situation" (Sanaz, 4th interview). Another teacher addressed learners' self-confidence by explaining that "they can speak about the picture which is related to the listening...It gives them confidence so they can be somehow sure that they will be able to understand the listening" (Sina, 2nd interview).

Another possible source of difficulty in L2 listening is learners' inability to concentrate (Underwood, 1989). Learners' listening performance can also be influenced by their anxiety and low self-confidence (Bekleyen, 2009). Therefore, it seems reasonable that teachers tried to encourage learners to become involved in the task and improve their self-confidence by using top-down (e.g. discussing the topic of listening) as well as bottom-up (e.g. replaying the task) activities. The emphasis on engaging learners also shows the effect of CLT, since pre-listening is primarily used to enable learners to understand better and encourage them to become

involved with the spoken text (Underwood, 1989). Teachers tried to create an environment that minimised students' level of anxiety and increased their engagement with the spoken texts and tasks to maximise their level of concentration and opportunities for comprehension.

5.4 Teaching listening explicitly

Teachers' cognitions underpinning their classroom practices were also explored in Part C of the questionnaire with regard to these six themes: (1) teaching listening explicitly as a separate skill, (2) the importance of teaching metacognitive strategies, (3) the importance of bottom-up and top-down activities, (4) the effect of listening on other skills, (5) the effect of extensive listening on listening skills, and (6) the importance of applying authentic materials. Teachers' cognitions were examined through a series of Likert-type items that were randomized when the actual survey version was prepared (see Appendix D). In order to make a more effective presentation of the results, items investigating a specific theme were grouped together in separate tables. Each table shows the frequency counts according to the level of agreement; strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Table 12 below shows teachers' responses in terms of the first theme, teaching listening explicitly as a separate skill.

Table 12: Teachers' cognition about teaching listening as a separate skill: Part C (N=72)

Statement	Response scale					Mean	SD
	5	4	3	2	1		
1. Listening skill can be improved without explicit teaching.	0 (0)	4 (6)	11 (15)	50 (69)	7 (10)	2.17	0.671
2. Listening improves only through exposure to a large number of spoken texts.	1 (1)	9 (13)	24 (33)	33 (46)	5 (7)	2.56	0.854
3. Comprehending listening input (inferring main idea) is the first priority in teaching listening.	16 (22)	46 (64)	9 (13)	1 (1)	0 (0)	4.07	0.635

1: strongly disagree; 5: strongly agree

It is unsurprising to note teachers' strong disagreement (79 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed) with the statement that "listening skill can be improved without explicit teaching", in view of their statements about the range of instructional practices required to teach this skill. With regard to the second statement, just over half of the teachers (53 percent) believed that listening cannot be improved simply through exposure to different spoken texts. One-third of the teachers neither agreed nor disagreed with the second statement, which suggests some uncertainty by these teachers about the effectiveness of explicit teaching. Teachers appeared to believe that extensive listening was an effective way of enabling learners to recognize contexts and attitudes and helped them achieve better comprehension. This belief justified their emphasis on asking students to re-listen to the text and replaying the recorded text during the listening or post-listening phase. On the other hand, most teachers (88 percent) conceptualised listening instruction as comprehending listening input or task completion, not how to listen effectively, which supports Goh's (2008) claim that effective listening and effective listening instruction are largely a matter of successful task completion, "with a focus on the product of listening, [in which] every activity becomes a test of the learners' listening ability" (p. 191).

A further aspect of teachers' comments about teaching listening explicitly related to the importance of teaching metacognitive strategies. This can be seen in the responses presented in Table 13.

Table 13: Teachers’ cognition about the importance of teaching listening strategies: Part C (N=72)

Statements	Response scale					Mean	SD
	5	4	3	2	1		
4. Students can be taught how to listen effectively to understand spoken texts better.	26 (36)	42 (58)	3 (4)	0 (0)	1 (1)	4.29	0.615
5. Teaching listening strategies is useful to help learners overcome specific listening difficulties.	34 (47)	31 (43)	7(10)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.38	0.659
6. After listening, students should discuss how they completed the listening activity (i.e. the strategies they used).	7 (10)	21 (29)	31(43)	11 (15)	2 (3)	3.28	0.938

1: strongly disagree; 5: strongly agree

Teachers’ responses showed a high level of agreement concerning the possibility of teaching learners how to listen effectively, and the importance of teaching listening strategies (94 and 90 percent respectively). Only one teacher strongly disagreed with the possibility of teaching effective listening. Regarding the importance of discussion of how learners completed the task, more than one third of teachers (39 percent) agreed or strongly agreed. However, there was much uncertainty across the group, with 43 percent of teachers reporting the neutral response (chose the mid-point (3) option).

In Part E of the questionnaire (reasons behind their stated common classroom practices) many teachers conceptualized teaching listening as developing learners’ listening skills (see Table 10) through classroom practices that included focusing on key words, reading questions in advance, encouraging prediction, and focusing on the gist.

Another reason under this category was focusing on keywords as the seventh most common explanation (10 times). These findings support teachers’ reported beliefs and principles in Part C, since most teachers believed in the beneficial effect of teaching listening strategies on listening skills. Teachers’ additional comments on teaching listening in private English

institutes in Iran in Part F of the questionnaire denoted the importance of teaching listening skills (see Table 9).

Similar to the findings revealed in Parts C, E, and F of the questionnaire, all the interviewed teachers (except Rana) reported that teaching listening strategies such as taking notes, predicting, and focusing on key words can improve the skill (See Table 11). It was the sixth frequently stated reason (27 times) behind their observed classroom practices. One teacher addressed the issue with the following comment:

For example note taking. In [some] books, listening tasks are really lengthy, so it's impossible to memorize and keep in mind all the listening part. So I asked them to take some notes, write the key words, some notes in order to help them to remember the whole idea and when they look at it they could understand the track (Sina, 1st interview).

Another reason under this category was the necessity of explicit teaching (mentioned 25 times). Two teachers (Elahe and Sina) addressed the necessity of explicit teaching more than other teachers. Sina believed that it is the teachers' duty to familiarize learners with different techniques:

I do believe that if students are familiar with different ways of coming up with the correct answer they could, you know, do their best in listening part so I think it's a must to...familiarize students to different techniques. I think it's the duty of each teacher to do this. I tried to explain some techniques to them to help them to improve their listening strategies and techniques (Sina, 5th interview).

These two excerpts reveal that teachers did not consider listening to be a passive or receptive skill in which learners would improve their listening ability just by listening to the target language. Teachers' cognitions appeared to contrast with the underlying assumption of the osmosis approach, which is grounded in the audio-lingual method and a belief that listening skills develop automatically through recurrent exposure to L2 input and practice (Cauldwell, 2013; Mendelsohn, 1998). The evidence supports the importance of teaching metacognitive strategies recommended by a number of scholars (Richrds & Burns, 2012; Newton, 2016;

Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010). In spite of teachers' emphasis on comprehension and task completion, they believed in the teachability of listening skills. This corroborates the essential assumption of the process-based approach that the skill of listening is an amalgam of different, independent components (e.g. planning, monitoring, and summarizing) which can be recognized and explicitly taught and practiced (Mendelsohn, 1995; Siegel, 2013b).

However, one teacher (Shilan) argued that there is no need to teach listening explicitly. This belief is also apparent in the following comment:

I think that it doesn't need explicit teaching because it's connected to other skills to teach in the class... So everything is connected to each other so we cannot teach listening as a kind of, as I said, independent one or something different... (Shilan, 1st interview).

Both questionnaire and interview results show teachers' uncertainty about the effectiveness of explicit teaching of strategies on developing listening skills. Teachers' uncertainty provides support for the reservations expressed by a range of scholars about the beneficial effect of strategy training (Swan & Walter, 2017); and the amount of time needed to be devoted to teach strategies (Renandya & Farrell, 2010).

5.5 The importance of bottom-up and top-down activities

With regard to the importance of using both bottom-up and top-down activities, seven items in the questionnaire explored teachers' cognition. The first four items were related to bottom-up activities and the remaining three items, to top-down. Results are summarised in Table 14 below.

Table 14: Teachers' cognition about the importance of bottom-up and top-down activities: Part C (N=72)

Statements	Response scale					Mean	SD
	5	4	3	2	1		
4. Dictation can improve listening.	4 (6)	22 (30)	21 (29)	20 (28)	5 (7)	3.00	1.048
5. Comparing the oral and written form of input (scripts) by learners can improve their skill of listening.	6 (8)	42 (59)	18 (25)	6 (8)	0 (0)	3.67	0.751
6. The main difficulties for students in listening relate to their lack of vocabulary.	13 (18)	27 (38)	14 (19)	18 (25)	0 (0)	3.49	1.061
7. Students' main difficulty in listening lies in identifying word boundaries.	13 (18)	40 (56)	15 (21)	3 (4)	1 (1)	3.65	0.816
8. Students can use the context of the passage to understand than to listen carefully to what is actually said.	13 (18)	35 (49)	10 (14)	11 (15)	3 (4)	3.61	1.082
9. Students do not understand some spoken texts due to the lack of background knowledge about the topic rather than the lack of vocabulary.	12 (17)	37 (51)	18 (25)	4 (6)	1 (1)	3.76	0.847
10. Listening instruction should provide an opportunity to negotiate meaning.	14 (19)	40 (56)	17 (24)	1 (1)	0 (0)	3.93	0.699

1: strongly disagree; 5: strongly agree

Bottom-up activities refer to understanding at sound and word level, with the aim of comprehending the spoken text. Studies into L2 listening pedagogy demonstrated that improving word recognition skills and prosodic cues (e.g. stress and intonation) through analytic (bottom-up) processing are extremely important (Goh, 2017; Hulstijn, 2003; Kurita, 2012). Findings also showed that drawing learners' attention to other aspects of oral input such as assimilation, elision, and reduced forms by comparing oral and written forms can enhance comprehension (Field, 2003; Vandergrift, 2007). Concerning the frequency counts in the questionnaire, the majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the use of three bottom-up activities in listening instruction. While distinguishing word boundaries and comparing the oral and written forms of input received the highest level of support (74 and 67 percent respectively), only around one-third of respondents (36 per cent) believed that dictation can help listening. Forty teachers (56%) also reported that improving learners' vocabulary helped

to improve their listening skills. Statements 8-10 referred to top-down activities, and teachers' responses showed that more than two-thirds of teachers believed that top-down activities can help improve learners' listening skills. Comparing these responses with those for bottom-up activities, teachers agreed more with the use of top-down activities except using context to understand the spoken text ($M=3.61$, $SD=1.082$). In terms of activating background knowledge, scholars support the principles that understanding listening texts involves more than comprehension of words and sentences using linguistic knowledge, and that other factors such as prior knowledge of the world and the topic are essential (Brown & Lee, 2015; Gass, 2013). More than two-thirds of teachers (68%) reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that activating prior knowledge can help to improve this skill by facilitating the comprehension of spoken texts. In terms of all bottom-up and top-down activities, teachers reported that they believed that dictation was the least helpful activity ($M=3.00$, $SD=1.048$). Negotiating meaning (i.e. asking for clarification, rephrasing, and checking what learners have understood are some of these activities) was reported to be the most effective classroom practice ($M= 3.93$, $SD=0.699$).

Teachers appeared to be well aware of the efficiency of the combination of both bottom-up and top-down activities for L2 listening instruction. Their beliefs and principles confirm scholars' argument that incorporating both activities in the listening classroom provides the best assistance to help learners develop their listening skill (Graham, 2017; Nunan, 2002; Rost & Wilson, 2013). While a number of scholars have challenged the orthodoxy of the beneficial effects of top-down practices on developing listening comprehension (Renandya & Farrell, 2010; Swan & Walter, 2017), top-down activities can provide teachers with interesting and effective ways to engage learners with the spoken text (Newton, 2016).

5.6 Using listening to improve other skills

Another important theme of focus in the questionnaire was to examine teachers' cognitions relating to the effect of listening on two macro-skills (speaking and reading) and one sub-skill (grammar). Almost all teachers (99 percent) believed that listening can improve speaking. With regard to reading and grammar, more than half of the respondents (53 percent) maintained that listening can enhance reading and grammar. However, there was much uncertainty across the group, since teachers reported choosing the neutral response (40 and 33 percent respectively). Table 15 below shows the results.

Table 15: Teachers' cognition about the effect of listening on other skills: Part C (N=72)

Statements	Response scale					Mean	SD
	5	4	3	2	1		
14. Listening can improve the skill of speaking.	48 (67)	23 (32)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.65	0.508
15. Listening can improve the skill of reading.	13 (18)	25 (35)	29 (40)	4 (6)	1 (1)	3.63	1.061
16. Listening can be helpful to practice grammatical rules.	7 (10)	31 (43)	24 (33)	10 (14)	0 (0)	3.49	0.856

1: strongly disagree; 5: strongly agree

Teachers' cognitions as explored in Part E of the questionnaire (see Table 10) revealed that the third most commonly stated explanation underlying customary classroom practices was using listening to improve other skills (25 times). Teachers noted that listening can bring about improvements in language knowledge (five times). In Part F of the questionnaire related to participants' further comments on teaching listening in private English institutes in Iran (see Table 9), seven teachers also reported the effect of listening on language knowledge and other skills, in particular the skill of speaking. Teachers considered listening to be a valuable input that can also develop language knowledge. For instance, one teacher stated that "emphasis on listening skill from the very beginning of language learning is helpful in improving other skills." Another teacher pointed to the effect of listening on speaking by stating that "listening

tasks are essential to help students to build up their accent, pronunciation, [and] intonation.” Teachers’ espoused beliefs and principles suggest that they were fully aware of the potential effect of listening on facilitation of L2 learning (Krashen, 1985; Vandergrift, 1999), and the development of the other language skills such as speaking and reading (Oxford, 1993; Richards, 2005).

Interview findings also support teachers stated beliefs and principles in Parts E and F of the questionnaire. Using listening to improve other skills was the third mostly frequently stated reason underpinning classroom practices, and all teachers referred to this issue (noted a total of 84 times in interviews with the eight participants). Teachers believed that listening could improve learners’ speaking, since the whole group of eight teachers mentioned this on 52 occasions. The effect of listening on speaking was more emphasized in relation to other explanations. To a lesser extent, teachers believed in the beneficial effect of listening on vocabulary learning (noted 18 times by the group) followed by pronunciation and grammar (mentioned nine and five times respectively). The types of classroom practices that were explained might help to improve other skills, included linking listening with communicative oral interaction task; vocabulary extension tasks; a focus on specific pronunciation related to the text, a focus related to the text grammar in the post listening extension phase. One teacher noted:

I think if students can listen well understand well they can speak well... I think the most important thing for students is speaking, and listening can help them they should be able to listen well and speak well so these two are the most important factor for me (Rana, 1st interview).

While two teachers linked listening with writing on just two occasions, none of the participants pointed to the possible effect of listening on writing, which suggests that teachers did not believe that linking listening with writing can bring about improvements in writing skills. This

belief contrasts with recommended techniques in language teaching that encourage integrating different skills such as listening and writing (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013).

All the teachers except one (Rana) also believed that listening is a valuable source that can improve language knowledge. However, only half of the teachers explained their classroom practices according to this reason (nine times). A teacher considered listening to be “a way for students to be exposed to language [as] an important way for students to learn the language” (Elahe, 4th interview). On the whole, teachers’ espoused beliefs and principles support this claim that listening is at the heart of language learning and it plays an important role in second language acquisition (Kurita, 2012; Rost, 2013). Their beliefs and principles about the importance of linking listening and speaking also corroborate this idea that listening is an essential skill for any learner whose aim is to develop the ability to communicate in spoken interactions of any kind (Nation & Newton, 2009). Teachers’ emphasis on listening supports findings from previous research that comprehensible input is vital for L2 acquisition, and that listening can play a critical role in providing learners with this type of input (Krashen, 1985; Brown, 2017).

5.7 The effect of extensive listening and authentic materials

The last two themes were related to the effect of extensive listening on listening skills and the importance of applying authentic materials (Statements 17 and 18). Responses are presented in Table 16 below.

Table 16: Teachers' cognition about extensive listening and the use of authentic materials Part C (N=72)

Statements	Response scale					Mean	SD
	5	4	3	2	1		
17. Listening to significant amounts of comprehensible input can improve listening.	13 (19)	49 (68)	8 (11)	1 (1)	1 (1)	4.00	0.692
18. Students at different levels (elementary to advanced level) can benefit from authentic materials such as news reports, cartoon, movies, and advertisements.	46 (64)	22 (30)	2 (3)	2 (3)	0 (0)	4.56	0.690

1: strongly disagree; 5: strongly agree

With regard to the effect of extensive listening, most teachers (87 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that it can enhance listening. Similarly, the vast majority of teachers (94 percent) reported using authentic materials to improve the skill of listening. Teachers' comments on listening instruction in Part F of the questionnaire also indicated that 19 percent of the total stated comments were related to the importance of the use of authentic materials (see Table 9). Approximately one-third of the teachers (nine) commented that using authentic materials can motivate learners to listen more effectively since these materials can engage learners' attention in the class. Teachers only mentioned cartoons and movies when referring to authentic materials; songs, news, and authentic recorded conversations were not reported. Observation results showed that teachers used cartoons as simulated authentic materials with dialogues in cartoons that were more interesting and accessible than other sources. One teacher described using cartoons because "[they] are fun and also the characters in cartoons, they speak slowly and use simple phrases that ... are understandable for students" (Elahe, 1st interview).

Interview findings support the beliefs and principles stated in Parts C and F of the questionnaire. Teachers believed that authentic materials were interesting and keep learners more engaged thereby they listen more which helps them to improve this skill. This reason is also apparent in the following comment, made to explain using cartoons or movies in class:

Those cartoons or movies are interesting for the classroom and we usually play that at the end of the class so the students leave the class happily, they are more interested in the class and they are eager to attend the class next session (Shilan, 5th interview).

Another teacher stated:

...those cartoons or movies are interesting for the classroom and we usually play that at the end of the class so the students leave the class happily, they are more interested in the class and they are eager to attend the class next session (Sanaz, 3rd interview).

Using extensive listening to help learners improve their listening skills was the least common classroom practice reported by teachers. Only four teachers pointed to extensive listening on seven occasions in total in interviews as part of their explanations of classroom practices. However, teachers used the term “extensive listening” to refer to instructional strategies such as repeated exposure to the spoken text during the listening phase and between successive listenings by asking students to re-listen to the whole text or segments to check their answers. These strategies were actually examples of conventional intensive listening instruction in which teachers’ main focus was to draw learners’ attention to language form, and raise their awareness of how sound, structural, and lexical differences can influence meaning (Rost, 1991).

Teachers also noted that listening for a long period of time to books with audio files (e.g. story book accompanied with CDs) and cartoons can help learners to make progress in the skill. Although all of these sources are also simulated authentic materials, the key point that makes it different from the effect of authentic materials on listening is to ask learners to listen to significant amounts of easy, enjoyable, and meaningful input for a long period of time. These features denote the key characteristics of extensive listening (Chang & Millett, 2013; Renandya & Farrell, 2010). One teacher explained that “I can see in the classroom some of the students are very good at listening because they keep watching cartoons” (Majid, 1st interview). This

excerpt shows that teachers knew that extensive listening (listening to significant amounts of relatively easy input for a long period of time) can improve listening over a period of time; however, it was not a frequently used classroom practice and half of the teachers did not use it at all in their classes. Teachers stated that insufficient time was the main reason that they did not use this technique frequently. Vida stated that “we don’t have time in the class [so] I wanted them to listen at home and do some exercises” (Vida, 3rd interview).

5.8 Summary

A comparison of the quantitative and qualitative data revealed that what teachers reported in their questionnaire responses was mostly in line with interview findings. Both questionnaire and interview data revealed that teachers’ main concern in listening instruction was to facilitate comprehension. The qualitative findings also supported the quantitative results that teachers believed in the importance of the combination of bottom-up and top-down activities in order to encourage learners to be more involved with listening tasks to promote better understanding and task completion. Similarly to the questionnaire results, there was uncertainty among interviewed teachers with regard to whether they considered listening to be a teachable skill that requires explicit and independent teaching. However, both sources of data indicated that teachers emphasized the importance of instructing with regard to metacognitive strategies. Teachers’ responses in the questionnaire supported interview findings that listening is an invaluable input for L2 learning and developing other skills, especially speaking. Both questionnaire results and interview findings showed that teachers believed in the beneficial effect of authentic materials as mean to improve learners’ communicative competence and their comprehension in authentic situations. Finally, they stated a belief that extensive listening can have beneficial effects on listening skills; however, due to insufficient time for classroom instruction it was not a frequently used practice.

5.9 Discussion of teachers' cognition

This section discusses the findings related to questionnaire and interview data in answer to the second research question about teachers' cognitions. Findings indicated that teachers realised the importance of listening in improving other skills and its vital role in providing comprehensible input essential for L2 acquisition. They considered that linking listening with other skills provided learners with good opportunities to examine spoken texts for salient features such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Their emphasis on listening corroborates the claim by a number of scholars that one of the main differences between less and more successful learners is the extent to which they are introduced to listening as part of L2 acquisition (Rost, 2013; Vandergrift, 2007). Although teachers noted that listening can improve other skills, they did not believe that it is a skill that simply serves other skills. They regarded listening as an independent and teachable skill that needed to be taught explicitly. For example, one teacher said that "I think they [learners] need to know some techniques and we [teachers] should teach students to learn how to listen" (Rana, 1st interview). Another teacher commented that "I tried to explain some techniques to help them to improve their listening strategies." (Sina, 3rd interview). These excerpts show that teachers support scholars' claim about the teachability of effective listening (Graham, 2017; Richards & Burns, 2012).

Another noteworthy feature of teaching strategies is teachers' familiarity with these techniques. Teachers in both questionnaire and interview data enumerated a range of metacognitive techniques that are necessary for effective listening and teachable such as predicting, taking notes, skimming, and reading questions before listening that can help learners to plan what to emphasize while listening. Teachers specified certain strategies that have been advocated by a number of scholars in the listening process including selectively attending to certain aspects,

making predictions, planning, and monitoring (Graham & Macaro, 2008; Vandergrift, 2003). Teachers believed that using these strategies could enhance learners' self-awareness and confidence and commented that using these strategies can improve learners' performance, since they become more focused and motivated. Their beliefs and principles support previous findings regarding the beneficial effect of metacognitive strategies on listening performance (Goh, 2008; Vandergrift et al., 2006). While integrated approaches based on a range of largely metacognitive techniques were dominant in the current study, teachers' main concern in listening instruction was to facilitate comprehension. This emphasis on general understanding supports the findings of two other studies that teachers' first priority is to achieve successful comprehension and task completion, not the development of listening skills (Graham et al., 2014; Liao & Yeldham, 2016). Use of these techniques in classes was not linked to future listening situations in confirmation of the statement by Graham et al. (2014) that "[teachers'] emphasis is on the 'here and now' and not on developing skills for the future" (p. 53).

Findings also demonstrated that teachers' cognitions resonate with the current literature on listening pedagogy. Teachers were completely familiar with the common three stages of listening pedagogy (pre-, while, and post-listening) based on the recommended conventional format (Field, 2008; Richards & Burns, 2012; Wilson, 2008). They commented that they followed these stages since they considered them to be an effective way of organising listening instruction. Although teachers did not refer to scholars' texts by name, they used scholarly terms such as extensive listening, using authentic materials, and linking listening with other skills when they addressed issues in listening pedagogy. In addition, they believed in taking into account both the process and products (correct responses to listening) by using both bottom-up and top-down activities. In spite of teachers' awareness of theoretical terms and concepts, they tended to be conservative and to favour combinations of traditional and

communicative approaches. A significant percentage of mid-point responses were given to several Likert-type statements in the questionnaire responses such as the use of bottom-up and top-down practices, explicit teaching, and listening strategies. This shows that many teachers were in doubt about the beneficial effects of some practices in listening instruction and the most efficient ways to help learners. These reservations about a number of classroom practices are not just limited to teachers, since there is no consensus on a number of issues among scholars such as when authentic materials should be implemented in the classroom (Guariento & Morley, 2001; Richards, 2006) and long-term benefits of teaching key words on listening improvement (Graham, 2017).

Questionnaire and interview results revealed that teachers on some occasions referred to theory or methodological aspects to explain their beliefs and principles. Teachers explained the beliefs and principles underpinning a number of their classroom practices by referring to a number of theories in listening instruction including the effect of bottom-up and top-down activities, extensive listening, pre-teaching key words, activating background knowledge, skimming, and strategies. To some extent, as in previous studies (Borg & Burns, 2008; Graham et al., 2014), teachers' explanations were practical and empirical; however, they used scholarly terminology to explain their classroom practices on a number of occasions. This does not mean that all teachers' explanations were theory-based, since a number of explanations were empirical or too general and teachers simply commented that these practices can improve listening without explaining how this aim might be achieved.

While some scholars advocate extensive listening to improve listening skills (Renandya & Farrell, 2010; Swan & Walter, 2017) and others promote the teaching of strategies (Mendelsohn, 1995; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010), teachers in this study expressed a

preference for a combination of both of these. This indicates that teachers recognized the importance of extensive listening; however, they acknowledged their critical role in instructing procedures rather than simply overemphasizing listening input. Teachers also stated that authentic materials were effective at all levels, a view that contrasts with the view of a number of scholars who consider these materials useful only for higher levels of proficiency (Guariento & Morley, 2001). Similar to a number of researchers, teachers believed that these materials expose learners to the characteristics of natural speech (Field, 2008), address learners' interest (Gilmore, 2011), and intensify learners' motivation (Thanajaro, 2000), which in turn brings about improvements in their comprehension (Gilmore, 2011; Gallien, 2001).

The results and discussion of the outcomes with regard to the third research question (factors influencing teacher cognition and classroom practices) are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Factors influencing teacher cognition and classroom practices

This chapter reports on and discusses the outcomes of questionnaire responses and interviews to answer the last research question about the factors that shape teachers' cognitions and classroom practices with regard to listening instruction. The first two sections present the findings from questionnaire responses (Parts D and F) and interviews, and the third section comments on these findings.

6.1 Questionnaire results

Two questions in Part D of the questionnaire (see Appendix D) asked teachers to rank five factors (contextual factors, learners, teacher education courses, participants' experience as learners, and participants' experience as teachers) in terms of the extent to which these factors shaped the beliefs and principles that underpinned their classroom practices with regard to listening instruction. Teachers rated each factor on a five point scale, ranging from the least important (1) to the most important factor (5). Table 17 presents the results. The numbers in the table show the frequency of responses across 72 respondents, while the numbers in brackets (*italicised*) show percentages.

Table 17: Questionnaire responses regarding factors shaping teachers' cognition: Part D (N=72)

	Frequency					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Contextual factors	9 (13)	13 (18)	26 (36)	10 (14)	14 (19)	3.10	1.269
Learners	24 (34)	18 (25)	14 (19)	11 (15)	5 (7)	2.38	1.283
Teacher training courses	16 (22)	21 (29)	17 (24)	10 (14)	8 (11)	2.63	1.283
Your experience as a learner	22 (30)	13 (18)	9 (13)	19 (26)	9 (13)	2.72	1.456
Your experience as a teacher	1 (1)	7 (10)	6 (8)	22 (31)	36 (50)	4.18	1.039

1: the least important; 5: the most important

As can be seen in the table, questionnaire responses indicated that most teachers (81%) considered their teaching experience to be the most important factor in shaping their beliefs and principles (M= 4.18, SD=1.039) followed by contextual factors (M= 3.10, SD=1.269). Only one teacher ranked this as the least significant factor. Teachers' experience as English learners (M= 2.72, SD=1.465) and teacher education courses (M= 2.63, SD=1.283) were also considered to be important factors. While the effect of learners was rated as the least important factor (M= 2.38, SD=1.283), the effect of the last three factors was not noticeably different.

With regard to the second question in Part D, teachers were asked to rank the same five factors based on the extent to which they shaped their listening classroom practices. Teachers again rated each factor on a five point scale, ranging from the least important (1) to the most important factor (5). The effect of teaching experience was again ranked as the most important factor in shaping teachers' listening classroom practices (M= 4.10, SD=0.906). It seems that participants' teaching experience to a large degree informed their listening classroom practices and formed their teaching method. The second most influential factors were both the effect of contextual factors and learners (M= 3.47, SD=1.100 and 1.074 respectively). Teachers'

experiences as learners (M= 1.94, SD=1.161) and teacher training courses (M=1.86, SD=1.052) were rated as the least important factors. These results are summarised in Table 18.

Table 18: Questionnaire responses regarding factors shaping listening classroom practices: Part D (N=72)

	Frequency					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Contextual factors	0 (0)	11 (15)	22 (31)	14 (19)	25 (35)	3.47	1.100
Learners	5 (7)	7 (10)	19 (26)	31 (43)	10 (14)	3.47	1.074
Teacher training courses	33 (46)	26 (36)	5 (7)	6 (8)	2 (3)	1.86	1.052
Your experience as a learner	32 (44)	26 (36)	4 (6)	6 (8)	4 (6)	1.94	1.161
Your experience as a teacher	0 (0)	1 (1)	23 (32)	16 (22)	32 (45)	4.10	0.906

1: the least important; 5: the most important

A comparison of responses to both questions in the questionnaire shows that teaching experience was considered to be the most influential factor in forming both teachers' cognitions (M= 4.18, SD=1.039) and listening classroom practices (M= 4.10, SD=0.906) followed by contextual factors (M= 3.10 and M= 3.47, SD=1.100 respectively). While learners were ranked as the least important factor in shaping teachers' cognition (M= 2.38, SD=1.283), they were the second most important element in shaping classroom practices accompanied by contextual factors (M= 3.47, SD=1.100 and 1.074 respectively). Although teachers' experience as learners (M= 2.72, SD=1.465) and training courses (M= 2.63, SD=1.052) were rated as less important factors in forming teachers' cognitions, they were even less effective in shaping listening classroom practices (M= 1.94, SD=1.161 and M=1.86, SD=1.052 respectively).

The final section in the questionnaire (Part F) asked teachers to provide additional comments on teaching listening in private English institutes in Iran (see Appendix D). Teachers made 14 comments in total related to the effect of different factors on teachers' cognitions and listening instruction. Teachers pointed to three elements including contextual factors, learners, and teacher training courses. Table 19 below shows the results.

Table 19: Categories of teachers' further comments on teaching listening in Iran: Part F

Categories	Frequency of further comments
Total	
Improve teacher training courses	6
Provide more classroom equipment (e.g. TV and internet)	5
Take into account learners' needs	3

Teachers' comments indicated that approximately 43 percent of total stated comments on influential factors in listening pedagogy were related to the improvement of teacher training courses. Six teachers addressed the quality of teacher training courses and believed that they must be improved. For example, one teacher stated:

“More teacher education or development programs are needed. Authorities should encourage more peer teacher observation and workshops. I mean, sharing our thoughts under the shadow of a dialogic development program (not a transmission-based of course, as it is still widely deployed in Iran) can help us in teaching this skill which has been a matter of challenge for all teachers, specifically novice ones”.

Another teacher said:

“I do believe that teaching the skill of listening has been neglected most of the time due to insufficient techniques teachers own, so teachers must be trained effectively to be equipped with a variety of teaching listening skills”.

The second important factor was facilities. Five teachers reported that there were not enough facilities in classrooms, as most institutes were not equipped with internet, large screen TVs, computers, and laboratories. They considered this condition as an obstacle for teaching the skill of listening effectively. For instance, one participant mentioned: “unfortunately most institutes in Iran haven’t gotten video projector, TVs or other equipment for providing a better situation to instruct listening in the class to emphasize the skill.” Another teacher said, “most classed are not connected to the internet and it’s impossible to use online listening materials.” Although it was apparent that the Principals of institutes have tried to solve the problem by providing teachers with computers and the internet, there were a large number of institutes that did not have access to these facilities; therefore, teachers were dissatisfied with the equipment available for listening instruction.

Teachers also pointed out how learners can influence their cognitions and classroom practices. Three participants pointed out that teachers must pay more attention to learners and their needs must be taken into account. One teacher wrote: “the most important thing that should be considered in teaching of listening is students’ needs and interests.” Another teacher commented, “your teaching is highly under the influence of learners’ age, motivation, proficiency level, and especially needs.”

6.2 Interview results

Table 20 below shows information from the interviews about the factors that influenced teachers’ cognitions and listening classroom practices. Teachers’ responses to the common question about why they used certain kinds of classroom practices helped to explore potential factors that affected participants’ listening classroom practices and stated reasons underlying them. In Table 20, categories of influential factors were ranked from the most commonly stated

to the least commonly stated. Teachers' statements were coded to aggregate similar codes to form themes. These themes were classified into ten categories. The six main categories in this grouping were contextual factors, learners, teaching experience, teachers' experience as learners, teacher training courses, and listening assessment.

Table 20: Factors influencing teachers' cognition and classroom practices

Teachers' names	Elahe	Majid	Neda	Rana	Sanaz	Shilan	Sina	Vida	
Factors									Total
Contextual factors	4	9	6	15	1	9	9	8	61
Learners	4	9	9	6	4	3	9	5	49
Teaching experience	4	0	2	5	4	9	2	2	28
Teachers' experience as a learner	2	2	3	0	0	0	1	1	9
Teacher training courses	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	1	5
Listening assessment	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	4

6.2.1 Contextual factors

The effect of contextual factors was the most frequently stated element in the interviews. The entire group of eight interviewed teachers referred to contextual factors on 61 occasions. Contextual factors in this study were divided into four categories: teaching materials (course books, mentioned 27 times), limited time (mentioned 19 times), teaching facilities (mentioned nine times), and curriculum makers (the Principals of institutes, mentioned six times). These four categories are described below.

Teaching materials

Within the four contextual factors, the effect of teaching materials on teachers' classroom practices was noted as the most effective factor (noted a total of 27 times). The whole group of six teachers (except Sanaz and Vida) placed emphasis on this factor. Teachers commented that

the number of classes in which they instruct listening depended on the course book. For example, most of them stated views similar to following: “it depends on the book and the number of listening tasks in the book” (Rana, 1st interview). Another teacher stated: “I must say that every other session I teach listening, I think it depends on the book exactly” (Sina, 1st interview). In explaining some classroom practices, teachers stated that they only followed their course books and what is expected to be taught. For example, one teacher said:

I have to say I am very dependent on the book that I teach, because when I’m using American English File I’m using a different way, I’m teaching a different way when I’m teaching World English book ...I’m so dependent on the book I teach, somehow the things in the books I’m using in the classroom (Majid, 1st interview).

Or another teacher described some classroom practices by stating that:

“Exactly the task was this that they needed to listen and take notes because of that I did [not clear]...of course because of the instruction in the book I asked them to take note... I was supposed to do that as it was the goal of the task in the book” (Neda, 3rd interview).

These excerpts reveal that six teachers strictly followed the text books and their teaching method was influenced by these materials. I could also observe that all teachers tried to follow all steps designed for the listening tasks in their course books. The findings of interviews support the findings of previous studies that teaching materials are the main authority in some classrooms (Dendrinis, 1992; Tomlinson, 2012). These can play the role of curriculum and influence classroom practices based on the topic, type and organization of classroom discourse (Guerrettaz & Johnston, 2013).

Although all teachers followed all listening tasks in their teaching materials, two teachers sometimes modified listening tasks as they believed that those modifications were necessary to help some learners to complete some listening tasks more effectively and to suit their particular learners. For instance, Elahe said:

I think this book we are teaching “Interchange” doesn’t have so many tasks that can be done, doesn’t involve students that much that should be done, so I try to add more things such as speaking, guessing such as following up questions to the task to keep students more involved (Elaheh, 4th interview).

Another teacher who asked further comprehension questions to elicit students’ ideas and argued:

“... I usually tell students to listen at home, but this time they didn’t have the script [in their books]...It was very difficult for them to understand so I had to check the meaning of sentences...The number of questions at the end of the task was not enough so I had to ask more questions to be sure that they realised the listening completely” (Shilan, 2nd interview).

The above extracts show that some experienced teachers have enough self-confidence and knowledge to make some modifications to listening tasks, making most of them more achievable and interesting according to classroom realities. This is also compatible with earlier findings that there are some discrepancies between prescribed and actual use of text books in classrooms based on learners’ needs and teachers’ pedagogical goals (Katz, 1996; Zacharias, 2005).

Limited time

The second important element with regard to contextual factors was time. Although teachers emphasized listening instruction and followed the text books, all teachers (except Elahe and Sanaz) considered limited time as a barrier in teaching listening (mentioned 19 times). The following example illustrates this:

I know that I’m responsible to finish, for example, three or four units so there might not be enough time... you know, to be honest, there is not enough time to work on listening (Majid, 1st interview).

The common reason for omitting a number of listening tasks in the workbooks was due to time constraints. For instance, when I asked one teacher why she skipped one listening task in the workbook and asked learners to just complete it at home, the teacher responded:

“In our classes, we have just three hours per week and it’s really difficult to manage the time. Because, for example, this term we have to finish two units [of the course book] and we have a lot of things to do and I can’t spend time on each extra listening task in the workbook (Neda, 1st interview).

Another teacher explained: “because we don’t have enough time in class I wanted them to watch it at home [a task in the workbook] and do the exercises, answer the questions and then in the class we just check [answers]” (Vida, 3rd interview).

The importance of having enough time as an important contextual factor is acknowledged by a number of scholars (Farrell & Lim, 2005; Wette, 2010). Teachers believed that limited time did not let them spend enough time on teaching listening. Similar to other classroom-based studies, consideration for time in lessons and courses was an important external contextual factor that shaped teachers’ decisions (Woods, 1996). A number of teachers’ main beliefs and principles underpinning teachers’ classroom practices are also strongly connected to covering materials over the expected time (Graham et al., 2014). Concerning the context of Iran, this research supports the findings from previous studies, indicating that teachers regarded the persistent constraint of time as a barrier for teaching of L2 English effectively (Hayati, 2008; Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008).

Facilities and curriculum makers

The third common stated element in interviews within contextual factors was the effect of facilities on listening instruction and five teachers addressed the issue on nine occasions. For example, one teacher stated, “I think it’s a really hard job [to teach listening] as I told you before, in IRAN, you don’t have good facilities you don’t have good equipment in the class” (Shilan, 1st interview). Another teacher, however, was satisfied with the equipment and said, “the computers are available here that you can use, so I usually use cartoons or story books

with CDs” (Sanaz, 1st interview). This shows that having access to essential facilities such as the internet, computers, and TVs can influence listening classroom practices and provide more opportunities for teachers to increase their listening instruction quality. In institutes that were equipped by a language laboratory or computers, teachers benefited from them by being able to show simulated authentic or supplementary materials to spend more time on listening instruction.

The fourth important contextual factor was curriculum makers (in this case the Principals of institutes). This was noted six times in interviews by four teachers. The Principals of institutes could change teachers’ classroom practices by making the final decision about the number of sessions and teaching materials that must be covered during a semester. As a whole, the curricula in private English institutes in Iran are designed or developed by Principals and teachers mostly have no authority to change them. Teachers addressed the mandated curriculum as an important factor that can influence their classroom practices. Teachers in some institutes stated that they are not allowed to use extra materials as a number of Principals asked them to just focus on the textbook. For example, one teacher stated, “we are not allowed to use extra materials. [Researcher: Can you tell me why?] Because Mr. Ahmadi [the institute Principal] asked us to focus on the book only” (Neda, 1st interview). However, in one institute, the written lesson plan by one teacher (Majid) showed that he was asked to use the laboratory up to three times during a semester to allow for extra listening (supplementary materials) and authentic materials. Prior to commencing the semester, Majid knew the exact dates and he had this opportunity to select his extra listening materials. However, another institute was not equipped with a language laboratory, and the Principal of the institute asked two teachers (Elahe and Sanaz) to use authentic materials in class during the semester. The Principal assigned the teachers the type of extra listening material (an animation) and he also specified

the amount of time to be spent on extra material in each session, which was 10-15 minutes every other session.

Interviews revealed that six teachers were not happy with the curriculum as they believed that they had only two sessions a week and had to teach several units; therefore, they did not have enough time to place more emphasis on the skill of listening. These findings corroborate the claim by a number of scholars in Iran that teachers considered some context-based constraints including mandated curriculum and didactic policies as barriers in teaching English (Mellati et al., 2013; Hayati, 2008), especially ELT curriculum planning by the Ministry of Education in public schools and universities (Atai & Mazlum, 2013). Researchers also denoted explicit curriculum purposes and constraints as influential factors in other contexts (Basturkmen, 2014; Crookes & Arakaki, 1999; Woods, 1996).

6.2.2 Learners and teachers' experience as learners

Concerning the effect of learners, interview data indicated that the effect of learners was the second important element (after contextual factors) frequently stated in shaping teachers' cognition as well as listening classroom practices (see Table 20). It was noted a total of 49 times across eight participants. Teachers emphasized learners' proficiency level, motivation, needs, and expectations that can affect their classroom practices. All teachers noted that they sometimes changed classroom practices and type of activities to suit their learners. The following two examples concerning learners' English proficiency demonstrate the effect of learners. Rana put forward the issue and said, "if they [students] are at lower levels, I want them to listen and write the text, write the script" (Rana, 3rd interview). Another teacher explained, "our teaching depends on our students, too. For example, when we teach a level

when the students are not good at that level we need to change our lesson plan and change activities (Neda, 1st interview).

Teachers also believed that they should understand students' needs and conditions and choose the best classroom activity to suit them. One teacher explained, "first of all, the most important thing is students, because I have to know their needs and therefore I consider those needs, so the first and the most important factor for me is my students" (Sina, 1st interview). Elaheh and Shilan pointed out the effect of their students' motivation on their listening instruction. They tried to make listening more interesting by using authentic materials. Teachers also stated that they asked personal questions relevant to the topic of the spoken text to make learners more interested in listening tasks. Teachers on some occasions avoided repeating the spoken text. They realised that it would be boring for students since students had already completed the task. This shows that teachers were completely aware of the students' role in language learning and tried to make them motivated and involved.

The findings were in accordance with the scholarly literature on this topic, showing that teachers' cognitions are based on their own teaching contexts, and they need to take into account their learners' needs and conditions (Borg, 2015; Nishino, 2012). The findings also corroborate earlier findings that teachers' perception of learners' needs and language proficiency level can have significant effects on their use of methodologies (Burgess & Etherington, 2002; Richards & Pennington, 1998). In addition, teachers modify their classroom practices to be more compatible with their students' expectations and needs (Nishino, 2012; Schulz 2001).

The effect of teachers' experience as learners was the fourth commonly stated factor in interviews, which five teachers mentioned on nine occasions (see Table 20). Whereas three teachers (Rana, Sanaz, and Shilan) never talked about the effect of their learning experience on their listening pedagogy, two teachers avoided using a number of classroom activities based on their negative learning experiences. For example, Majid and Elahe never assigned students any homework due to their negative experience as learners. One participant stated, "I don't like to give them homework, I don't know why, maybe because when I was a student I didn't like homework a lot, that's why I think maybe it was so boring (Majid, 1st interview). Another teacher explained:

When I was a student I had to transcribe all the text at home, I hated [it] I never did it. I don't want my students [to] know all the words but I want them to be more exposed to language to learn most of what they can, I mean the language itself. So I don't give them some homework like this. (Elahe, 1st interview).

Neda and Vida gave more attention to listening due to the difficulties they experienced in L2 learning and recognized the importance of listening in English learning. Neda said, "when I was a learner I had some difficulties with different parts of, you know, listening. I know it was important, but my teachers unfortunately didn't help me a lot" (Neda, 1st interview). Vida said that:

"While I was learning English my listening was not good and I didn't work on listening enough. I understood that listening is an important skill in communication and I couldn't understand my teachers very well. I couldn't understand even a word in movies... listening is very important in communication because you don't just talk and you should understand other people too..." (Vida, 1st interview).

These findings support the term of "apprenticeship of observation," which means that teachers learn how to teach by means of their long experience as learners (Lortie, 1975). It also confirms the claim by a number of scholars that teachers' learning experiences shape their beliefs and principles and filter their decisions in classrooms (Borg, 2003; Mansour, 2009; Pajares, 1992).

6.2.3 Teaching Experience

The effect of teaching experience was the third commonly stated factor in interviews. Seven teachers referred to their teaching experience to explain their beliefs and principles underpinning their listening instruction (noted a total of 28 times in interviews with eight participants). They believed that their teaching experience was helpful to assist their learners to tackle the barriers they encounter in listening. They argued that teaching English for a long time and working in different institutes enabled them to predict students' difficulties and choose different activities to improve their listening skills. Only one teacher (Majid) did not address his teaching experience as a significant element. This comment by Sina exemplifies the effect of this factor "my experience helps me a lot and it gives me clues to deal with different students and different problems" (Sina, 1st interview).

In explaining some classroom practices, teachers stated that their teaching experience informed a number of their listening classroom practices. For example, when I asked Shilan why she asked learners to repeat sentence after she paused the recording text she replied, "according to my experience, repeating is very important for listening because I can check some details...I can check some of the words with them [students]" (Shilan, 2nd interview). Another teacher (Sina) in describing why he clarified or previewed the task requirements stated that: "according to my experience, if students know that, what the subject of the listening is, it somehow helps them to focus. It helps them to concentrate" (Sina, 5th interview). Sanaz had the same idea by referring to her experience and mentioned, "I have experienced during these years if students know what they are going to listen and do, they can deal with [listening] difficulties better" (Sanaz, 1st interview). These excerpts show that teachers draw upon a range of classroom practices and realise how they can improve learners' performance in listening according to their teaching experience. These findings confirm the claim by a number of scholars that

teaching experience shapes teachers' cognitions and filters their decisions in classrooms (Gatbonton, 2008; Nunan, 1992; Richards, 1998).

6.2.4 Teacher training courses and assessments

Interview findings showed that the effect of teacher training courses was less influential than other factors. Only four teachers on five occasions believed that these courses helped them in teaching listening (see Table 20). However, these teachers did not refer to their training courses at university. They just considered a number of short in-service teacher training courses held by the private English institute where they were working, noting that these were helpful for listening instruction. One teacher commented:

In the TTC [teacher training courses] course in our institute which were held with Ms Hashemi [the Principal of the institute] we learned some methods and we studied some books... We learned how to teach. For example, first pre-teach the new words then write a question on the board (Vida, 1st interview).

Another teacher stated, "I took a teacher training course [after graduation from university], it helped me because sometimes I changed my methods of teaching listening" (Sanaz, 1st interview). These excerpts show that these courses did not affect listening instruction significantly through considerable changes in teachers' cognitions.

Interview findings showed that the effect of teacher training courses was not substantial. Half of the teachers did not refer to training courses at university and only four teachers referred to in-service teacher training courses. They believed that the courses helped them to meet the standard of knowledge and proficiency that is required for teaching in private English institutes. Findings in this study contrast those of a number of studies, showing that teacher education programs play a role in changing teacher cognition (Clarke, 2008; Mattheoudakis, 2007). It also supports the findings of another study in Iran that teacher training centres managed by the

Ministry of Education and universities responsible for training English language teachers were not very successful in providing practical knowledge of teaching that teachers need (Nezakat-Alhossaini & Ketabi, 2012).

The least influential factor noted in interviews was assessment. Only three teachers (four times in total) regarded this as a factor that affected their classroom practices (see Table 20). In one lesson, Vida gave students one minute to read questions before listening. She explained, “I think it’s the standard form even on TOFEL or IELTS or other exams, we have some time to have a look at the sentences in the listening part” (Vida, 2nd interview). In another lesson, Sina did not replay the recorded text as she believed that:

I am looking at this part as you know somehow as an official exam. In official exams you don't have time for second listening you should be prepared as well and come up with answers just with once listening to the track...so I tried to put them in an official exam atmosphere (Sina, 5th interview).

Neda also believed that listening is difficult for students as she believed that Iranian students who want to take the ILETS examination face some difficulties regarding the listening module. Therefore, she asked learners to listen at home to extra materials regularly, since it could help them to be prepared for the examination.

On the whole, findings revealed that final assessment in private English institutes did not have a major effect on teaching listening. Not replaying the recorded text for the second time; assigning learners a limited time to read questions before listening; and asking them to listen more at home were the effects of assessment on teachers’ cognition and their listening classroom practices. Listening tasks in the text books and final tests were based on communicative approaches. Tests at the end of course were similar to those tasks that learners practice in their course books during the semester (see Appendix I). Since communicative and

learner-centred approaches to language teaching and learning are employed in private English institutes in Iran (Talebinezhad & Sadeghi Beniss, 2005), washback effects from tests could not exert a significant impact on listening classroom activities. Some scholars have argued that some kinds of listening tests, especially multiple-choice items, are intrinsically easier than others (Teng, 1998; Cheng, 2004). However, listening was assessed through a range of questions including taking notes, editing (correcting the wrong piece of information), and open questions, and item difficulty did not influence students' performance.

6.2.5 Summary

Comparison of questionnaire and interviews responses showed that there were some discrepancies between these two sources of data. While open-ended and closed questions in the questionnaire did not reveal any information about the effect of teaching materials on teacher cognition and classroom practices, qualitative findings indicated that this was regarded as the most influential element of contextual factors. Teaching experience and contextual factors were the most dominant elements emerging from the questionnaire responses. However, interview findings illustrated that teachers considered the effect of contextual factors more influential than any other elements, followed by the influence of learners in shaping teachers' cognitions and classroom practices. Both questionnaire and interview data indicated that teaching facilities and teacher training courses must be improved in Iran. In spite of this, interview findings indicated that teachers considered in-service teacher training courses held by the private English institute very helpful. Finally, only the interview data demonstrated that listening assessment had a washback effect, however, its effect was very limited.

6.3 Discussion of factors influencing teachers' cognition and classroom practices

Although a number of studies have investigated the effect of different factors on teachers' cognitions and classroom practices, the present study has explored the extent to which each factor can influence them. While the effect of learners was under contextual factors in Borg's (2003) diagram about factors influencing teacher cognition and classroom practices, this study showed that it can be considered as an independent and powerful factor that includes a range of elements such as learners' expectations, foreign language proficiency level, and needs. Findings indicated that learners can directly influence both teachers' cognitions and classroom practices. Another issue was the effect of teaching materials within contextual factors. This study also revealed that the effect of course books was more noticeable than other context-based factors in shaping teachers' cognitions and classroom practices.

With regard to contextual factors which could shape teachers' cognitions and listening classroom practices, both questionnaire and interview findings indicated that these factors included teaching materials, time, teaching facilities, and mandated curricula. While they were ranked as the second most influential factor in questionnaire responses (after teaching experience), they were the most frequently stated element in the interviews. These discrepancies between questionnaire and interview results can be attributed to overestimating the effect of teaching experience by participants in shaping their beliefs, principles, and listening classroom practices. Findings illustrated that contextual factors are more powerful than teaching experience, as teachers have to change their classroom practices due to contextual constraints.

Researchers in Iran have also asserted that there are inadequacies in EAP teaching in Iran in relation to syllabus documents, evaluation of students' language proficiency (Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008; Eslami, 2010), insufficient time to cover materials (Hayati, 2008), and political influences that constrain the design of English language teaching curricula (Hayati & Mashhadi, 2010). Due to these constraints in the public sector for English education in Iran, private EFL institutes, where curricula and course books are mainly based on CLT (Talebinezhad & Sadeghi Beniss, 2005; Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006), tried to keep to a minimum the exacerbating effect of these contextual factors. However, the effects of contextual constraints including limited time, insufficient teaching facilities (lack of language laboratories, TVs, and the internet), and mandated curricula still influence the extent to which teachers can put into practice their beliefs and principles regarding listening instruction in private English institutes.

Both questionnaire and interview findings indicated that learners were the second important factor (after contextual factors) in forming teachers' cognitions and listening classroom practices. In the context of Iran, establishing private English institutes has been an answer to students' needs and the inadequacies of teaching methodology in the public sector that is based on the grammar translation method (Jahangard, 2007; Namaghi, 2010). Teachers in private English institutes were aware of learners' dissatisfaction and their needs to improve their aural skills. Therefore, teachers' emphasized communication according to learners' needs. Since students are also somewhat dissatisfied with EAP courses at universities and complained about overlooking the oral-aural skills that students also need in academic contexts (Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008), teachers emphasized listening and speaking skills to improve students' ability to communicate.

Questionnaire and interview findings showed that teacher education programs managed by the Ministry of Education and universities had no effect on teachers' cognitions and listening classroom practices. However, in-house teacher training courses held by private English institutes for in-service English teachers had a limited effect. This supports findings of other studies that found no clear evidence of modification in teacher cognition, and teachers' cognitions were quite resistant to change as a result of teacher education courses such as a BA course in teaching EFL or ESL (Borg, 2005; Urmston, 2003; Peacock, 2001). With regard to the context of Iran, most courses in teacher training centres focus on theoretical rather than practical knowledge (Nezakat-Alhossaini & Ketabi, 2012). Therefore, private English institutes hold in-house training courses in CLT for novice teachers to help them meet the standard of knowledge and proficiency that is required. It was not surprising that these in-service training courses were more effective than education programs managed by the Ministry of Education and universities. Nevertheless, these in-service training courses were not able to have a significant effect on listening pedagogy. This supports previous findings that these training courses cannot lead to fundamental changes in teachers' cognition and classroom practices (Borg, 2011).

The effect of assessment was the least influential factor in shaping teachers' cognitions and listening instruction. In regard to Iran, the washback effect of the national School-Leaving Test of English and universities' entrance examinations had negative effects on teachers by pressuring them to neglect communicative activities and using the grammar-translation method (emphasizing reading translation and vocabulary and grammar instruction) to meet the requirements of the examinations (Mokhtari & Moradi, 2013; Salehi & Yunus, 2012). However, teachers in private English institutes follow communicative and learner-centred approaches to language teaching (Talebinezhad & Sadeghi Beniss, 2005), and they placed

emphasis on oral skills, especially listening. It seems that teachers were aware of the exacerbating effect of assessment on learners' language proficiency, since EAP learners at universities considered listening to be extremely demanding (Rahimirad& Moini, 2015).

A summary of findings, pedagogical implications, limitations of this study and suggestions for further research are presented in the final chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

This chapter provides a summary of the key findings of this study followed by the pedagogical implications for researchers, teachers, and teacher educators. I will also discuss the limitations of this study and provide suggestions for further research.

7.1 Review of the study

The primary concern of this study was to examine how teachers instruct with regard to the skill of listening. It also investigated teacher cognitions that underpinned teachers' choices about listening pedagogy and which factors influenced teacher cognitions and listening classroom practices. The study was conducted in seven private English institutes in Gilan, located in the north of Iran. A mixed methods research approach was adopted, employing quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (some questionnaire responses, observations, interviews, and curriculum documents) methods to collect data. While quantitative data was useful in providing a general picture of the research findings, qualitative data helped to go further into detail and deepen the general picture that the quantitative results presented. Seventy-two completed questionnaires were returned by teachers. Eight teachers accepted the invitation to participate in the second stage of the study including observations and interviews. Each teacher was observed between six and nine times. Three to four hours of stimulated recall interviews were conducted with each participant. Since analysing qualitative data is an uneven approach, which includes overlap between data collection and analysis (Dörnyei, 2007; Maxwell, 2012), data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously. Regarding qualitative data, inductive and deductive coding procedures were adopted based on my interpretation of data (Dörnyei, 2007;

Miles et al., 2014). In terms of quantitative data, descriptive statistics (e.g. frequencies, percentages, and standard deviation) were carried out.

The first research question inquired about classroom practices that characterised listening instruction. Both questionnaire and observation results indicated that teachers followed the format of listening instruction as proposed in the literature and all three proposed phases of teaching listening. However, pre-listening was the most emphasized phase. Observation results also revealed that one-third of total classroom practice (30 instances in total) belonged to the pre-listening phase. In the questionnaire responses, while teachers utilized a range of bottom-up and top-down practices, their main concern was to ensure comprehension and complete listening tasks, not teaching learners how to listen more effectively. Observation results revealed that teachers employed a range of comprehension-based practices to teach listening but the most common classroom practices belonged to metacognitive-based practices and teaching learners how to listen. As a whole, listening instruction included a range of classroom practices characterised by bottom-up and top-down activities, comprehension- and metacognitive-based practices, using authentic materials, and linking listening with other skills according to integrated approaches.

With regard to the second research question about teacher cognitions underlying listening classroom practices, questionnaire and interview results showed that facilitating comprehension was teachers' first priority in listening pedagogy. The importance of both bottom-up and top-down activities was acknowledged by teachers. They also believed that these activities were effective in encouraging learners to be more involved with listening tasks, leading to better comprehension and task completion. Teachers pointed to the possibility of teaching listening as an independent skill that requires explicit teaching by drawing on

metacognitive strategies. They also believed that the skill of listening can provide invaluable input for L2 learning and development of other skills, particularly speaking. Teachers explained that using authentic materials can motivate learners to listen more effectively since these materials can draw learners' attention to listening tasks. In addition, they believed that these materials can improve learners' proficiency and comprehension in the context of real communication. Finally, teachers argued that extensive listening can improve listening over a period of time; however, teachers referred to the term "extensive listening" to explain some instructional strategies such as repeated exposure to the spoken text.

The third research question investigated potential factors that shaped teacher cognitions and classroom practices with regard to the skill of listening. While teachers ranked the effect of teaching experience and contextual factors as the most powerful factors in shaping teacher cognitions and listening classroom practices in the questionnaire responses, interview findings revealed that teachers considered the effect of contextual factors including teaching material, limited time, teaching facilities, and curriculum makers more influential than any other elements, followed by the effect of learners. Both questionnaire and interview findings also revealed that most teachers were dissatisfied with teaching facilities and teacher training courses since they believed that both of them must be improved. Finally, interview results indicated that listening assessment did not exert a significant effect on teacher cognition and listening classroom practices.

With regard to the main findings of this study, it can be said that listening pedagogy was characterised by a range of approaches and teachers revealed an extensive repertoire of listening techniques. Teaching listening also followed the core principles of CLT and the recommended format of teaching listening offered by a number of scholars (Field, 2008;

Wilson, 2008). In addition, teachers were highly aware of the importance of listening in and for L2 learning and the sources of difficulty for learners. They considered listening to be an independent skill which would benefit from the explicit teaching of metacognitive strategies. Teachers appeared to demonstrate familiarity with the existing literature on listening and thus appeared to have enough theoretical knowledge to teach the skill effectively. However, like in other contexts, some contextual factors such as limited time and facilities had exacerbating effects on listening pedagogy and caused some barriers for teachers, putting constraints on teachers' ability to put their cognitions about listening fully into practice.

What teacher stated in their interviews to justify their classroom practices was an amalgam of their beliefs and different types of knowledge including content, personal, practical and pedagogical knowledge. Findings were in line with the conceptual framework of teacher cognition provided in Chapters One and Two. For example, with regard to authentic materials, teachers had knowledge about this type of material and how to define it. They also believed that these materials can improve listening skills. In this case, teacher knowledge and teacher beliefs are clearly identifiable. However, drawing a clear border between teacher knowledge and beliefs was not straightforward in other instances. For example, teachers pointed out that teaching key words can improve comprehension. It was difficult to attribute this statement to teacher knowledge or beliefs since they did not explicitly state that they believed you should teach key words. Therefore, according to the conceptual framework, it was considered as teachers' cognition including both components in the framework: teachers' knowledge and beliefs. Results also showed that the reciprocal relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practices was mediated by a number of factors illustrated in the framework such as teachers' learning experience and contextual factors. However, the influence of teaching materials was not anticipated by the researcher at the beginning and interview findings

demonstrated that the researcher needed to modify and update the theoretical framework with regard to potential factors influencing teacher cognition and classroom practices by adding this factor.

7.2 Pedagogical implications

This classroom-based research was conceptualized as an answer to the limited number of studies that have explored listening instruction systematically. It examined what occurs in listening lessons and which classroom practices and teaching methods are used by EFL teachers. Since most of the existing literature on how teachers instruct listening is based on intuitive explanations and individual perceptions, quantitative and qualitative findings in this study helped to supplement these explanations and perceptions with more empirical evidence. In addition, results illustrated not only the extent to which the existing scholarly recommended formats for listening pedagogy and research findings were put into practice by teachers in listening classes but also which aspects of listening pedagogy were emphasized and which elements were ignored. The findings allow novice and pre-service teachers to be familiarized with an extensive repertoire of listening techniques employed by experienced teachers.

This study has bridged the gap between theory and practice with regard to how and to what extent researchers' findings and scholars' recommended formats for teaching listening can be put into practice. I hope that explaining different classroom practices might expand novice teachers' understanding of learners' listening difficulties in order to enable teachers to adopt appropriate listening techniques to improve their learners' listening skills. Findings indicated that it is necessary to emphasize listening by teaching the skill explicitly with regard to instructing in metacognitive strategies to improve learners' listening skills.

This study is also to some extent unique, since it combined quantitative and qualitative methods. A number of studies have only collected data through questionnaires or observations and interviews. However, this study employed four resources to collect more comprehensive data. This broader approach has special value in investigating and bringing about an in-depth understanding of complex issues such as teacher cognition. The mixed methods approach in this study tried to draw on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data to achieve a more complete picture and more reliable results with regard to listening pedagogy and teacher cognition through validating one set of findings against the other. Therefore, further understanding of listening instruction in an EFL context is promoted.

Quantitative and qualitative results indicated that teachers employed, to varying degrees, a range of comprehension-based practices including the teacher-centred method that focuses on the products rather than the processes of listening. While most listening teaching practices belonged to the metacognitive-focused practice category, teachers (albeit on only some occasions) taught explicitly and explained to learners how to use these techniques. This finding is useful in informing teacher educators to focus on the importance of meta-cognitive strategies and instructing pre- and in-service teachers in how to teach these strategies. Teachers can be aware of this fact that these teaching strategies can improve learners' listening skills. They can also make teachers aware of the importance of laying emphasis on the listening process. Finally, teachers were aware of a range of techniques and their listening pedagogy was based on integrated approaches. It is generally accepted that listening pedagogy should not pursue a one-size-fits-all approach. It assists other teachers to deal with the complex nature of listening instruction and helps their learners with various difficulties by utilizing a range of listening classroom practices.

This study has also provided a better understanding of teacher cognition in a specific EFL context (Iran) with regard to the skill of listening. In spite of the international literature on teacher cognition, the scarcity of studies into teacher cognition in listening pedagogy and the particular factors that shape this cognition has been acknowledged (Borg, 2015; Graham et al., 2014). This study has aimed to fill this important gap in the existing literature on teacher cognition in a particular context, thereby enhancing our understanding of its multi-faceted nature and its complex relationship with classroom practices and various influential factors. One of the underlying assumptions in this study is that teachers are not knowledge consumers (produced by researchers) and what they think and believe must be taken into account as an important factor that can shape classroom practices. On this basis it is argued that teachers can improve listening instruction by expressing their own ideas and reflecting on their own listening classroom practices, as they are the ones who know which classroom practices work and how. This reflection can be regarded as the first essential step that can assist teachers to look at their work in new ways, an introduction to any potential changes in their teaching. Teachers' practical knowledge can also inform scholars about the extent to which research findings work in real classroom practices.

Findings from this study may be of interest to teacher educators or teacher training course developers. That is, findings will help those who work in teacher education to be more aware of how, and the extent to which, different factors influence teachers' cognitions and classroom practices. Findings showed that training courses did not have a noticeable effect on shaping teacher cognitions and classroom practices. Teacher educators can consider experienced teachers' cognitions to be an important basis for discussion and reflection on how to improve teacher training courses. Principals of language institutes and curriculum makers can take into account the exacerbating effects of some contextual factors and how to keep their effects to a

minimum. Teachers can also be aware of the fact that some contextual factors such as large class size, lack of teaching materials, and heterogeneous classes may have exacerbating effects on their teaching and may hamper teachers from putting their cognitions into practice.

Finally, both quantitative and qualitative data revealed that teachers' own experience as L2 learners and teachers as well as learner variables (learners' expectation, foreign language proficiency level, and needs) can influence listening pedagogy. Teachers must be encouraged by teacher trainers and Principals of private English institutes to draw on their teaching experience as teachers alongside the needs of their L2 learners to improve their teaching quality. These experiences might inform teachers about how certain classroom practices have beneficial or adverse effects on improving listening skills. In addition, teachers' understanding of learners' needs, proficiency levels and learning expectations is essential. It can make listening practice more compatible with learners' expectations which, in turn, will result in more interesting listening activities that can enhance learners' attention and make them more involved. It is anticipated that this will improve learners' listening skills in the long run.

7.3 Limitations of the study

In spite of the potential contributions of this study to listening pedagogy and teacher cognition, a number of limitations are apparent. Firstly, the primary concern of this study was teachers. However, this does not mean that the importance of learners was downplayed. In order to make the research more comprehensive and enhance our understanding of listening instruction and teacher cognition, it is possible to go beyond teachers and investigate how teachers' listening classroom practices and their underpinning cognitions impact on learners' developments of listening skills. Since the main driving force for a number of teachers is to provide learners with beneficial learning experiences (Breen, 1991), the classroom practices that can help

learners must not be overlooked and, in turn, identifying these has implications for teachers' cognitions.

The second limitation is related to the selection of seven private English schools in the north of Iran to represent an EFL context. Due to a number of limitations such as limited accessibility to cities and institutes, time constraint, staggered semester breaks and distance between institutes, I conducted this research in only two cities. The small number of participants in this study, especially the number of returned completed questionnaires, is another limitation. Seventy-two returned questionnaires from just seven English institutes represent a small number. Although detailed descriptions of the participants, setting, and courses can improve the transferability of this study, caution must be taken with regard to generalizing quantitative findings to other contexts. In terms of the qualitative data, the responses of only eight participants from private institutes make it difficult to represent teachers from public schools and universities.

Finally, my experience as a former English teacher in one of the private English institutes in my home province and my familiarity with the curriculum of these institutes where my study was done helped me conduct this research. However, this familiarity might have made it difficult for me to be objective and might have resulted in some preferences to tease out teacher cognitions that underpin listening classroom practices, based on my own pre-conceived beliefs. To keep this effect to a minimum, a range of methods was taken by triangulation through collecting data both qualitatively and quantitatively and not being judgmental with regard to the cognitions and classroom practices that emerged from the data. The use of curriculum documents as low inference source of data and member checking were two other methods employed to alleviate certain biases.

7.4 Suggestions for further research

The research findings and limitations can inform suggestions for further research. Since the primary concern of this study was teachers, there is a need for further research to examine how teachers' listening pedagogy and underpinning cognitions contribute to learners' improvement in listening skills. An in-depth study on what learners believe can enrich teachers' and researchers' understanding of more effective classroom practices. This research would enable teachers to utilize a range of classroom practices that might be seen effective in making learners more involved and improving their listening skills.

This study attempted to shed light on listening pedagogy and teacher cognition in an EFL context. It was limited to seven private English institutes and a limited number of L2 English teachers. Further investigation of teachers in other EFL or ESL contexts can bring about better understanding of listening instruction and teacher cognition. It can also provide more information about the extent to which contextual factors have exacerbating or beneficial effects on listening instruction in other contexts. Additionally, further research could investigate in more detail what teachers think of other factors such as the effectiveness of teacher training courses and their experience as learners in other EFL and ESL contexts.

This study also exemplified how teaching materials can shape listening instruction and teacher cognition underpinning listening classroom practices. Since the number of studies in this area is limited (Guerrettaz & Johnston, 2013; Tomlinson, 2012), it is recommended that further studies investigate how textbooks can form listening classroom practices since they can shape the curriculum and have effects on students' language and language learning.

Finally, this study only focused on experienced English teachers who spoke English as L2. First, it is recommended that future research might place more emphasis on how novice teachers instruct listening and what they believe about listening instruction, in comparison with more experience teachers. This can enrich teachers' and teacher trainers' understanding of the listening process and what teachers think and believe about the skill. Researchers can examine how novice teachers' cognitions evolve by conducting a more longitudinal study and how inexperienced teachers react to contextual factors. Such studies might shed light on what type of experience or consideration is involved in the process of shaping teachers' main cognitions. Second, the comparison of L2 and L1 English teachers' listening classroom practices and cognitions would paint a more comprehensive picture with regard to this research topic.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethics Approval

**UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE
(UAHPEC)**

21-Jul-2016

MEMORANDUM TO:

Dr Rosemary Wette
App Lang Studies & Linguistics

Re: Application for Ethics Approval (Our Ref. 017661): Approved

The Committee considered your application for ethics approval for your project entitled **Teacher cognition and classroom practices for EFL listening in Iranian private English institutes**.

We are pleased to inform you that ethics approval is granted for a period of three years.

The expiry date for this approval is 21-Jul-2019.

If the project changes significantly, you are required to submit a new application to UAHPEC for further consideration.

If you have obtained funding other than from UniServices, send a copy of this approval letter to the Research Office, at ro-awards@auckland.ac.nz. For UniServices contracts, send a copy of the approval letter to the Contract Manager, UniServices.

In order that an up-to-date record can be maintained, you are requested to notify UAHPEC once your project is completed.

The Chair and the members of UAHPEC would be happy to discuss general matters relating to ethics approvals. If you wish to do so, please contact the UAHPEC Ethics Administrators at ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz in the first instance.

Please quote reference number: **017661** on all communication with the UAHPEC regarding this application.

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheets

Dear participant,

I am a doctoral candidate in Applied Language Studies at the University of Auckland. I am the researcher for the project described below. My supervisor is Dr Rosemary Wette.

Project description and invitation

The aim of this project is to explore what teachers believe and think about teaching the skill of listening, and also their classroom practices for instruction. I hope that you will find this discussion an interesting opportunity to reflect on your teaching practices, and share your knowledge. I am not interested in evaluating you or your teaching practices in any way.

I would like to invite you to help me with my research by allowing me:

- to observe and audio-record your usual classroom teaching for 10-12 hours, and take note on any information and interactions of interest to the study. The recorder can be turned off at any time during the observation at your request. Although you will be informed about the study, no data will be collected from students, and the voice recorder will be positioned so that only your voice will be recorded.
- to conduct 4-6 interviews over a 10-12 week period. Interviews of 45 minutes will take place after two observations each week. During these interviews I will talk with you about your beliefs and classroom practices with regard to teaching the skill of listening. Interviews will be audio-recorded; however, the recorder can be turned off at any time during the interview at your request.
- to have access to documentary data including course outlines and syllabuses, course books, lesson plans, worksheets, as well as assessment tasks and criteria.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. The Principal of your institute has given an assurance that there will be no employment consequence for you if you choose not to participate in this study.

If you choose to participate, the expected time commitment from you for the interviews will be 4-5 hours over a period of 10-12 weeks.

Data storage/retention/destruction/future use

Data relating to the study will be stored in a locked cabinet at the University of Auckland and destroyed after six years.

Right to withdraw from participation

You can withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason. If you agree to take part but change your mind, you can withdraw your interview data at any time before the end of data collection (30th November 2016).

Anonymity and confidentiality

The information that you give in interviews and questionnaire will remain confidential to the researcher and the supervisor. If the information you provide is published, this will be done in a way that does not identify you as its source. The researcher will analyse questionnaire, observation, and interview data.

You will be offered a copy of the digital files of the recordings of your lessons, and transcripts of your interviews, if you wish. If you would like a pdf copy of any publication that results from the study, you just need to indicate this on the consent form and provide an email address.

If you have any concerns about the study, or if you wish to withdraw, please contact the researcher:

Researcher:	Supervisor:	Head of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics
Mr Morteza Bagheri Sangachin	Dr Rosemary Wette	Dr Wayne Lawrence
Applied Language Studies and Linguistics	Applied Language Studies and Linguistics	Applied Language Studies and Linguistics
University of Auckland	University of Auckland	University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019	Private Bag 92019	Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142	Auckland 1142	Auckland 1142
New Zealand	New Zealand	New Zealand
Email: mbag026@aucklanduni.ac.nz	Tel: +649373-7599 ext. 88538 Email: r.wette@auckland.ac.nz	Tel: +649373-7599 ext. 87511 wp.lawrence@auckland.ac.nz

For any concerns regarding ethical issues you may contact the chair, the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, the University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone +649373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz

Appendix C: Participant Consent Forms

CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS: OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project title: Teacher cognition and classroom practices for the skill of EFL listening in Iranian private English schools

Name of Researcher: Morteza Bagheri Sangachin

Name of Supervisor: Dr Rosemary Wette

Contact email address for researcher: mbag026@aucklanduni.ac.nz

I have read the Participant Information Sheet. I have understood the nature of this research. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree to participate in the project.
- I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary, and that non-participation will have no consequences for my employment.
- I agree to allow the researcher to observe and audio-record 10-12 hours of my lessons that pertain to the skill of listening over a 10-12 week period.
- I agree to take part in 4-6 interviews of 45 minutes each over a 10-12 week period about my beliefs and knowledge with regard to teaching the skill of listening in the Iranian context.
- I understand that documentary data including course outlines and syllabuses, course books, lesson plans, worksheets, as well as assessment tasks and criteria that pertain to the skill of listening will be collected.
- I agree for my interviews and classroom practices to be audio-recorded.
- I understand that the recorder can be turned off any time during the observations and interviews at my request.
- I understand that the documents and data collected for this research will be kept for up to (6) years, and then destroyed.
- I understand that I may withdraw my agreement to participate at any time without giving a reason, and any data traceable to me up to the end of data collection (30th November 2016).
- I further understand that my name will not be used and that my anonymity will be guaranteed in any conference presentation or journal article that is produced as a result of this project.
- I wish/do not wish to receive a copy of the digital files of my recording.

Email address (if you wish to receive a copy of any report based on this study)

Name (Please print):

Signature:

Date:

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 21/07/2016 for (3) years. Reference Number **017661**.

Appendix D: Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS OF EFL LISTENING IN IRAN

I would like to ask you to answer the following questions concerning listening skill. This study is conducted by **the School of Cultures, Languages and Linguistics of the University of Auckland, New Zealand**, to better understand which approaches you employ to teach listening and your beliefs behind your classroom practices. This is not a test, so there are no “right” or “wrong” answers, and I am interested only in your personal beliefs and knowledge. Please answer each question sincerely and in as much detail as you can.

The questionnaires will be anonymous, OR you can provide your email to go into the draw **to win \$20** (one \$20 voucher for every 25 questionnaires I receive).

You can also **volunteer to be observed and interviewed** about your listening classroom practices and your underpinning beliefs. **The first ten teachers** to agree to be observed and interviewed will be accepted. If you complete the questionnaire and agree to take part in the observation and interview, **you will be gifted \$40.00**.

Please let us know your choices by highlighting one of the options below:

I would like to go into the draw to win \$20

NO

YES - my email address is:

YES: I am interested in being observed and interviewed for this study. Please email me the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form for the interview.

My email address is:

Part A:

1. Please rank these language skills and sub-skills in terms of teaching difficulty. Number the items below (1= the least difficult; 6. the most difficult)

Listening.....Speaking..... Reading.....Writing.....Grammar.....
Vocabulary.....

2. Please rank these different language skills and sub-skills based on how much you emphasize them? Number the items below (1= the least emphasized; 6. The most emphasized)

Listening.....Speaking.....Reading..... Writing.....Grammar.....
Vocabulary.....

Part B:

3. When you ask learners to listen, how often do you do the following?

Please place an X in one of the cells to show how often you do the following activities.

N: Never (0%) O: Occasionally (30%) S: Sometimes (50%) F: Frequently (70%)

U: Usually (90%) A: Always (100%)

	N	O	S	F	U	A
Before listening, I set the context (who is speaking, where, and why).						
Before listening, I ask them what they know about the topic.						
Before listening, I teach new vocabulary that is essential for understanding.						
Before listening, I teach all new vocabulary.						
Before listening, I ask them to predict possible answers to the questions.						

	N	O	S	F	U	A
While listening, I ask students to listen again.						
While listening, I ask questions for general understanding (e.g. the gist and main idea)						
While listening, I ask questions for details (e.g. time, dates, and directions)						
While listening, I ask students to verify their predictions.						
While listening, I ask students to focus on key words.						

	N	O	S	F	U	A
After listening, I ask students what their answers are.						
After listening, I repeat spoken texts to help learners answer sets of questions.						
After listening, I provide learners with correct answers.						

After listening, I ask learners to participate in verbal interactions to negotiate meaning.						
After listening, I ask them how they arrived at answers.						
After listening, I advise learners how to deal with future difficulties.						

4. Which of these classroom practices do you use in teaching the skill of listening?

		N	O	S	F	U	A
1	Ask learners to transcribe some listening input						
2	Ask learners to listen and repeat						
3	Ask learners to follow the script of the spoken input						
4	Ask questions to evaluate general understanding (e.g. main idea and the gist)						
5	Draw learners' attention to precise words						
6	Combine listening and speaking						
7	Combine listening and reading						
8	Watch types of entertainments (e.g. cartoons, movies, series, and advertisements)						
9	Discuss the topic of listening input						
10	Discuss listening difficulties						
11	Listen out for words they predict they may hear						
12	Draw learners' attention to grammatical units in spoken texts						
13	Keep a log of how they approach listening (i.e. how they complete tasks)						
14	Clarify the objectives of an anticipated listening task and/or proposing strategies how to handle it						
15	I ask students to write a summary of what they listened or watched.						

Part C:

5. How far do you agree with the following statements for teaching listening skill?

Please **place an X in one of the cells** to show how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

SA: Strongly agree

A: Agree

N: Neither agree nor

disagree

D: Disagree

SD: Strongly Disagree

		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Listening skill can be improved without explicit teaching.					
2	Listening improves only through exposure to a large number of spoken texts.					
3	Comprehending listening input (inferring main idea) is the first priority in teaching listening.					
4	Listening to significant amounts of comprehensible input can improve listening.					
5	Dictation can improve listening.					
6	Comparing the oral and written form of input (scripts) by learners can improve their skill of listening.					
7	Listening can improve the skill of speaking.					
8	Listening can improve the skill of reading					
9	The main difficulties for students in listening relate to their lack of vocabulary.					
10	Students' main difficulty in listening lies in identifying word boundaries.					
11	Students can use the context of the passage to understand than to listen carefully to what is actually said.					
12	Students do not understand some spoken texts due to the lack of background knowledge about the topic rather than the lack of vocabulary.					
13	Students can be taught how to listen effectively to understand spoken texts better.					
14	Teaching listening strategies is useful to help learners overcome specific listening difficulties.					
15	Students at different levels (elementary to advanced level) can benefit from authentic materials such as news reports, cartoon, movies, and advertisements.					
16	After listening, students should discuss how they completed the listening activity (i.e. the strategies they used).					
17	Listening can be helpful to practice grammatical rules.					
18	Listening instruction should provide an opportunity to negotiate meaning.					

Part D:

6. How do you rank the following factors in terms of their importance in **shaping your personal beliefs and principles for teaching listening?** (1= the least important; 5. the most important)

..... contextual factors (e.g. course books, curriculum, number of Students, examination requirements, time)

..... learners (e.g. their needs, expectations, and learning style)

..... teacher training courses at university or outside of university

..... your experiences as a learner

..... your experiences as a teacher

If you think other factors are also important, please write them here.....

Colleagues, society.

7. How do you rank the following factors in terms of their importance in **shaping your listening classroom practices?** (1= the least important; 5. the most important)

..... contextual factors (e.g. course books, curriculum, number of students, examination requirements, time)

..... learners (e.g. their needs, expectations, and learning style)

..... teacher training courses at university or outside of university

..... your experiences as a learner

..... your experiences as a teacher

If you think other factors are also important, please write them here.....

Society, students' parents

Part E:

In the table below, please list the most common classroom practices (3 or 4) that you usually use to teach listening and write your reasons behind these activities by completing the following sentences.

Classroom practices What do you do?	Reasons Why do you do this?
I	I believe that

Part F:

Do you have any further comments to make about teaching the skill of listening in a private English institute in Iran?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 21 July 2016 for three years, Reference Number **017661**.

Appendix E: Observation Guide

Techniques for teaching L2 listening	Detailed descriptions	Note: Classroom practices which may not lend themselves into these groups will be separately identified and categorized.
Comprehension approach		
Pre-Listening practices		
While-listening practices		
Post-listening practices		
Bottom-up practices		
Top-down practices (e.g. predicting)		
Using authentic materials		
Process-based approach		
Teaching listening strategies		
Teacher modelling		
Transferring practiced listening strategies to further listening situations		
Linking listening to other skills		

Appendix F: Interview Guide

Project title: Teacher cognition and classroom practices for the skill of EFL listening in Iranian private English schools

Name of Researcher: Morteza Bagheri Sangachin

Name of Supervisor: Rosemary Wette

A: Questions for the first interview. Can you tell me about ...

your teaching experiences

the extent to which you emphasize the skill of listening

the difficulty of teaching the skill of listening in comparison with other skills

your first priority in dealing with listening tasks (e.g., comprehension, correct answer)

B: Questions for the post-observation interviews

Teaching episodes: I am going to ask you about the techniques you applied to teach the skill of listening. We will also listen to related episodes to teaching the skill of listening recorded from your teaching. I would like you to listen to the episodes and talk about why you used particular strategies, questions and tasks in your classroom practices.

Below is a list of possible questions. Because this is a semi-structured interview, I will ask only a selection from this list in each interview depending on participants, response.

Classroom practices and the cognitions (what teachers think, believe, and know) behind teaching behaviours with respect to teaching the skill of listening:

Questions about the common format for teaching a listening task/activity (e.g. Can you tell me why you taught key words before listening task?

Can you tell me why you explain the topic of listening task? Why did you ask them to read questions before answering the questions? Why did you ask the students to refer to the transcripts? Is this your common way of teaching?)

Approaches governing listening pedagogy (e.g. Can you tell me why you used authentic listening materials? Can you tell me why you asked students to listen several times?)

Factors influencing teacher cognition

There are a lot of factors which may shape teachers' beliefs for teaching the skill of listening as below:
Contextual factors (e.g. students, facilities, materials, students' needs, and so on)

The teacher's experience and knowledge

The teacher's experience as a learner

The effects of teacher training courses

Which factors are more important in shaping your teaching beliefs and choosing your classroom practices? Why?

Can you tell which factors are more influential in Iranian context? Why?

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Appendix G: Teachers' Written Lesson Plan

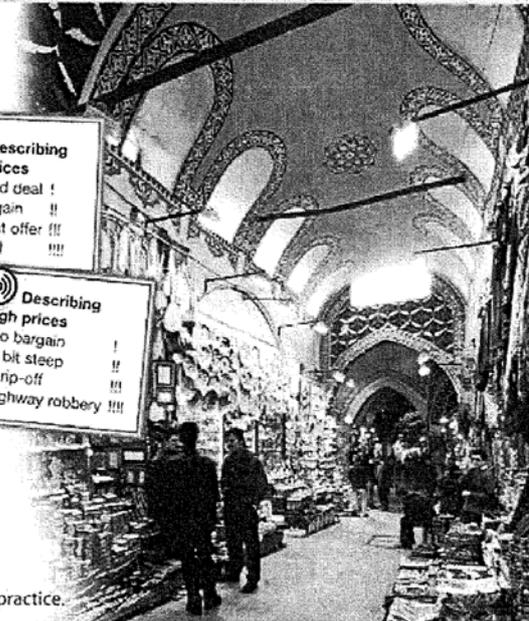
sessions	<p>course book: <i>Interchange 3</i> units 3-6 story books: <i>Silas Marner</i> level: pre-Intermediate Animations: <i>Kung Fu Panda 3</i></p>
1	<p>warm up (setting class rules and introducing story and Animation) : 30 min listening p. 14 (favorite gripes) : 20 min unit 3 → could you do me a favor : 20 min conversation p. 16 : 20 min</p>
2	<p>warm up : 10 min grammar (request with modals) : 20 min listening (favours) : 20 min writing p. 18 in the class as a group work : 20 min story (Review units 1-7) : 20 min</p>
3	<p>warm up (oral question) : 15 min word power (collocations) : 15 min perspective : 10 min grammar (indirect speech) and related exercises : 30 min Animation : 20 min</p>
4	<p>warm up (oral question) : 20 min ↔ explaining the grammar part again (indirect speech) speaking (group work) : 30 min work book : 20 min Animation : 20 min</p>
5	<p>warm up : 10 min Reading (yes or no?) : 30 min work book : 20 min story book (chapter 8) : 20 min</p>
6	<p>warm up : 10 min unit 4 → different parts of a news paper (introducing) : 20 min perspective (a surprise ending) : 20 min oral question unit 3 : 20 min Animation : 20 min</p>
7	<p>grammar (past continuous vs. simple past) and related exercises : 40 min listening (news broadcast) : 20 min story book (chapter 9) : 20 min work book : 10 min</p>
8	<p>warm up : 10 min conversation (what happened) : 15 min student chose a topic and made a story in each group (group work) p. 24 : 30 min new words p. 26 : 20 min story book chapter 10 : 15 min</p>
9	<p>grammar (past perfect) and related exercises : 30 min work book : 10 min Reading (strange but true) : 30 min video clip : 20 min</p>
10	<p>warm up : 10 min unit 3-4 progress check : 20 min listening p. 29 (what comes first) : 20 min work book unit 4 : 20 min story book (chapter 11) : 20 min</p>

Appendix H: Sample Teaching Material

1

GOAL

Give shopping advice



A **Conversation Snapshot.** Read and listen. Notice the conversation strategies.

A: I think I'd like to pick up a few souvenirs before I go back home. Any suggestions?

B: What do you have in mind?

A: Nothing in particular. Just something to help me remember my trip.

B: Well, the central market would be a good bet if you want to find a bargain.

A: Can you haggle over the prices?

B: Of course!

B **Rhythm and intonation practice**

B **Vocabulary. Shopping Expressions.** Listen and practice.

<p>browse take one's time looking at goods in a shop without necessarily wanting to buy anything <i>I'm not looking for anything in particular. I'm just browsing.</i></p> <p>bargain-hunt look around for goods that one can buy cheaply or for less than their usual price <i>The best time to go bargain-hunting is at the end of the season when the stores have big sales.</i></p> <p>window-shop look at goods in store windows without going inside or intending to buy them <i>The prices in the shops downtown are a bit steep, but I like to window-shop.</i></p>	<p>haggle / bargain discuss the amount of money one is willing to pay for something <i>I hate haggling over prices. / It's a great place if you like to bargain.</i></p> <p>shop around / comparison shop go to different stores in order to compare the prices and quality of things so one can decide which to buy <i>I think I'll shop around first before I make up my mind. / I'd suggest you comparison shop before you buy that new computer.</i></p>
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C **Listening. Listen to Activate Vocabulary.** Listen to the conversations about shopping. Infer whether or not the people think the shop's prices are high. Then listen again and choose the best shopping expression to complete each statement.

Do they think the price is high?			
Yes	No	They don't say.	
1. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	They're (bargain-hunting / haggling).
2. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	They're going to (window-shop / comparison shop).
3. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	They're just (browsing / haggling).
4. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	They just want to (bargain-hunt / window-shop).
5. <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	They're going to (browse / bargain).

Appendix I: Listening Assessment Task

Student's name:

Score:

Listening

A: Listen and answer. (/3)

1. Did Vanessa go to the skitsoid kids' concert?

.....

2. What is her favourite song?

.....

3. Which part was bad in his idea?

.....

4. When will they do another concert?

.....

5. How was the weather for the second part of the concert?

.....

6. Will he go for this concert again?

.....

Appendix J: Sample Interview Transcript

Stimulated-recall interview one with Safoora
25th October 2016

Interviewer: Before listening, you asked some questions about a monkey. Why? (Observation 1, 3 min 40 sec)

I wanted to know if students know about that animal or not because they were going to listen or hear something about that monkey. **Interviewer: Just this or anything else?** Because the listening that they were going to listen was about the animal and how it helps ill people to survive or to move that's why I asked them if they know anything about that monkey or not or I wanted to set the whole idea set the context for them.

Interviewer: You used a picture, can you tell me why? Because it can get students' attention better and [uh] students can deal with the pictures much better than anything else. If I go through explanations it takes a lot of time for them looking at the picture it can help them to understand better.

Interviewer: And what type of words do you show with pictures? Any kinds of words that can be shown by pictures. For example, the objects that are around us you can show them inside the class you can show them or you can bring the pictures but for conceptual things I can't use pictures.

Interviewer: What did you do here (activating learners' background knowledge)? (4 min 10 sec & 5 min 40 sec)

I tried to provide some parts of the listening that they were going to listen and I tried to explain and make it clear for students that they are going to listen to some disabled people that they are helped by that kind of monkey. I: Why did you do that? Because the students didn't have any ideas about the listening and I gave them some information to make it easy for them to understand the listening.

I: Before listening, you wrote some words on board (e.g. assist & dexterous). Why? (5 min 17 sec)

Because they were some new words that I was sure that the students didn't know about them and they would listen those words in the listening and by writing them on the board and explaining the meaning it would be easier for them to deal with the listening part.

Interviewer: Before listening, you asked students to read questions. Why? (7 min 40 sec)

Because by reading the questions they had enough time to analyse the questions that they were going to answer and also they had time to think about the questions. So first of all they had to read the questions and read the answers so the only thing that was important for me is to give them time to analyse the listening task that they listened. **Interviewer: No it was before listening?** Oh yes, I gave them the time to read the questions to get the gist of ideas and to concentrate on the specific information that they needed to extract from that listening part. **Interviewer: does it help listening?** Yes I think because by reading the questions they can understand what kind of information they needed to pay attention more.

Appendix K: Sample Observation Notes Transcription

Teacher: Elahe

Observation 1

Level: Intermediate

16th November 2016

2 girls and 7 boys present in class

Teacher drew learners' attention to the picture and tried to make them guess and speak in group "What is happening?", "Is the woman happy?"

After two minutes teacher started asking questions and asked all students what they think about the photo.

Then teacher asked some personal questions relevant to the topic which were (e.g. do you use your computer a lot?", "What do you use it for?" "Do you know anybody who doesn't use his computer at all?"

Teacher then wrote the meaning of some new words and phrases including in the listening text on the board "tend to, reveal, surf the net, privacy, and brows". Teacher explained the meaning of these words and phrase until she was sure that students understood their meanings.

Again teacher encourage students to guess the context of listening text by asking some questions "What do you think it's about?". Some students answered what they think.

Teacher spent almost a quarter on pre-listening phase and emphasized pre-listening activities considerably.

Teacher played the listening task and asked students to listen and check the words that the teacher wrote on the board. Teacher stopped listening twice to check what new words that were written on the board learners heard.

After that teacher asked students to read questions and guess the answers.

Teacher played the listening task again and asked students this time listen and answer the questions.

While listening, teacher stopped the listening task and directed learners' attention to key words or phrases.

Teacher broke down the task, and this time asked students to read the rest of the questions (two more questions) and listen to the rest of the listening task and answer the questions.

After listening, students were required to share answers and asked them to answer, but she didn't provided them with the answers.

Teacher played for the third time the listening task.

And after listening she checked answers and provided the learners with correct ones.

Appendix L: Categories used in the coding of classroom practices

Classroom practices	Authentic examples from observations
Discussed the topic of the text	Amineh when you and your husband when com to disagreement, ok, what do you do? I start nagging and then I become quiet. Fereshteh, what about you? We talk and solve the problem. Whenever I become angry, I go to my room, because I think I can't control myself.
Preview the text content	What do you think about the place? Where is it? Yes it's a bazaar. It's a conversation between a tourist and a shop assistant in this bazaar.
Pre-teach essential words	Do you know the meaning of these two words? Souvenirs and haggle over? They are important in this listening? Ok the first one. What is its meaning?
Explain the meaning of other new words from the text	There are some words in the listening that you answered, maybe a little difficult for you. What is the meaning of insomnia? Yes a person who can't sleep. What about imposter?
Ask students to read questions before listening	You have five questions. Ok? You have one minute to read questions before listening. If you can't understand them ask me.
Ask students to predict answers	For each item you have two process which one do you think offered by this store? Which one do you think? Circle them. What is your guess about number one Rana?
Clarify/preview the task requirements	We have four columns. You should listen and fill in the blanks. You need to just use no more than two words. First right items then prices.
Ask students to take notes	Do you have any idea about taking note? You know we have a lot of questions and just write very short phrases that help you to answer the questions. Ok?
Break down the task	They are giving advice about three of these items. Listen and just answer the first column. We listen again and we write what they said about each item. So just complete the first column. Ready?
Discourage use of L1	Again she was teaching the meaning of rural area and one student said the meaning in Farsi, she said in English.
Ask students re-listen to the text and check own answers	Learners checked their answers individually and after 10 seconds she replayed the text to let them check their answers.
Check understanding of new vocabulary from the text	While listening she explained the meaning of "strangle" and wrote down the meaning on the board. After the second news she explained the meaning of "shore".
Expose students to the text in segments only	She played the relevant segment not the whole text to check the answer and the students could answer correctly.
Ask students to listen and repeat	Listen, and at the end of some sentences I stop and you repeat. Sometimes I tell your name and some time we repeat in group. Understood?
Ask comprehension questions	What was the listening about? An interview about Japanese diet. Yes? What was her idea? Getting worse or better? Better. Yes. Why is it better?
Ask students to follow a transcript while listening	Look at the transcript and when I pause and ask any kind of question answer.
Explain and define key words or phrases	Ok listen guys, he said it influenced what? Yes, speech development. Speech development are key words. So you can say they speak more and it's true.

Classroom practices	Authentic examples from observations
Translate vocabulary	to make a long story short (encourage students to tell the meaning in Farsi)
Ask students if they wish to re-listen to the text	One student said “can we listen again?” She asked other students that they like to listen again and they asked replaying.
Replay the recorded text	I play again the CD and you have time to answer the questions again.
Ask students to check answers in pairs	Now you have two minutes to check answer together. You and you, you and you, and you three together. Check answers and find the correct ones.
Use authentic materials	You know today we are going to listen to a song. Ok? We talk about we listen to that.
Check/elicit answers from students	Now we can check answers. Ok Lida. Can you read question number one? Yes it’s false
Check how learners arrive at their answers	How did you come to this answer? How did you find the answer?
Dictation	Now you have the transcription with some blank spaces. Don’t you? This time you listen, while listening fill in the blank. Get it?
Link listening with communicative oral interaction task	You listened to a person who was a sleepwalker. What about you? Are you a sleep walker? Do you know anyone who sleepwalks? Oh, Sarah, you are a sleepwalker. Really? Yes. What do you do?
Link listening with vocabulary extension tasks	For next session you have to study the vocabulary of the listening and I ask you next time at the beginning of the class.
Link listening with a focus on specific pronunciation related to the text	Did you pay attention to how he pronounced w and v. Listen again, please. What is your victory? Listen to me. When you pronounce w you round your lip. Listen to it again.
Link listening with a focus on related to the text grammar	The speaker talk about her regrets. Yes? What sentences she used? Yes I wish and after I wish she used past simple or past perfect. For example listen to this. I wish it wasn’t my turn to cook tonight. What tense does she use after wish?
Link listening with writing task	For next session I want you listen and follow audio script and write a summary and talk in the class.

Appendix M: Categories used in the coding of teachers' cognition and influential factors

Stated beliefs	Examples from interviews
Ensure/improve comprehension Make students more engaged	I asked them questions because I wanted to check whether they have understood the listening I mean I wanted to check their understanding. I'm pretty sure that they will listen to the just one minute you know with concentration and the other parts will get lost in their mind. So I paused after each section and tried to encourage them to give me the correct answer and again this listening encouraged them to listen with more concentration...
Use listening to improve other skills Help students complete the task Activate background knowledge	That's for sure listening helps students to learn grammar, vocab, sure is the most important thing for them to learn how to speak. I divided the task to three different sections because I wanted the task to be more manageable for the students, so students could manage it. I just wanted their mind to be activated somehow because this listening was about a professor's idea about different movies but in order to activate their minds I just tried to ask their own opinion about the questions...
Teaching strategies can improve listening Authentic materials can improve listening Explicit teaching is necessary	I teach for example some sub-skills such as listening to key words and these things because I think they are very important for effective listening. I always suggest my students to watch cartoons, movies and I think it's very helpful. I think that explicit teaching helps students to be involved and be focused on what they are doing and when they pay attention when they are focused they learn better...
Increase learners' confidence Develop language knowledge Extensive listening can improve listening skills	It gives them confidence. First they check what they understood with their friends and they get enough confidence to talk to teacher and answer the questions I think. I think that listening is an important way for students to learn the language. Instead of for example reading story book I ask them to listen, they like and I think listening to long listening task can help them you know to improve their listening.

Stated factors influencing teacher cognition	Examples from interviews
Learners	Our teaching depends on our students. For example, when we teach a level when the students are not good at that level we need to change our lesson plan and we need for example to do something else...
Contextual factors	Unfortunately this term we didn't have enough time that was my main reason and if I have time I always try to bring a cartoon to the class because
Teaching experience	According to my experience students who watch a lot of movies and listen to music a lot are better speakers than the others.
Teaching materials	I think this book we are teaching "INTERCHANGE" doesn't have so many tasks that can be done, doesn't involve students that much that should be done so I try to add more things such as speaking guessing such as follow up questions that students are more involved.
Teachers' experience as learners	When I was a student I had to transcribe all the text I hated I never did it. I don't want my students know all the words but I want them to be more exposed to language to learn most of what they can...
Listening assessment	they have a lot of problems with listening even for their final exams, and for example they wanna pass IELTS or TOEFL exams and you know difficulties with listening, so they need to listen at home again even in class, I try to have some drills for them
Teacher training courses	I took as a TTC [teacher training course] course it helped me too, because sometimes I change my methods of listening for example three or four years ago

Appendix N: Sample Teacher Profile

Classroom activities

Pre-listening	During Listening and between listenings	Post-Listening	Post-Listening Extension
Activate background knowledge	Ask students re-listen to the text and check own answers	Replay the recorded text	Link listening with communicative oral interaction task
Set the context	Expose students to the text in segments only	Ask comprehension questions	Link listening with vocabulary extension tasks
Clarify the task demand	Ask comprehension questions	Check/elicit answers from students	
Pre-teach key words	Explain and define key words or phrases	Check how learners arrived at their answers	
Break down the task			
Assign students some pre-set questions			
Ask students to read questions			
Ask students to predict answers			

Principles and assumptions about listening

Listening need to be taught explicitly

Listening is important and must be emphasized

Listening can improve other skills

Listening strategies should be taught

Authentic materials can improve listening

My students influence my classroom practices

My experience as teacher mostly shape my principles and assumptions about listening

Listening is a difficult skill for students